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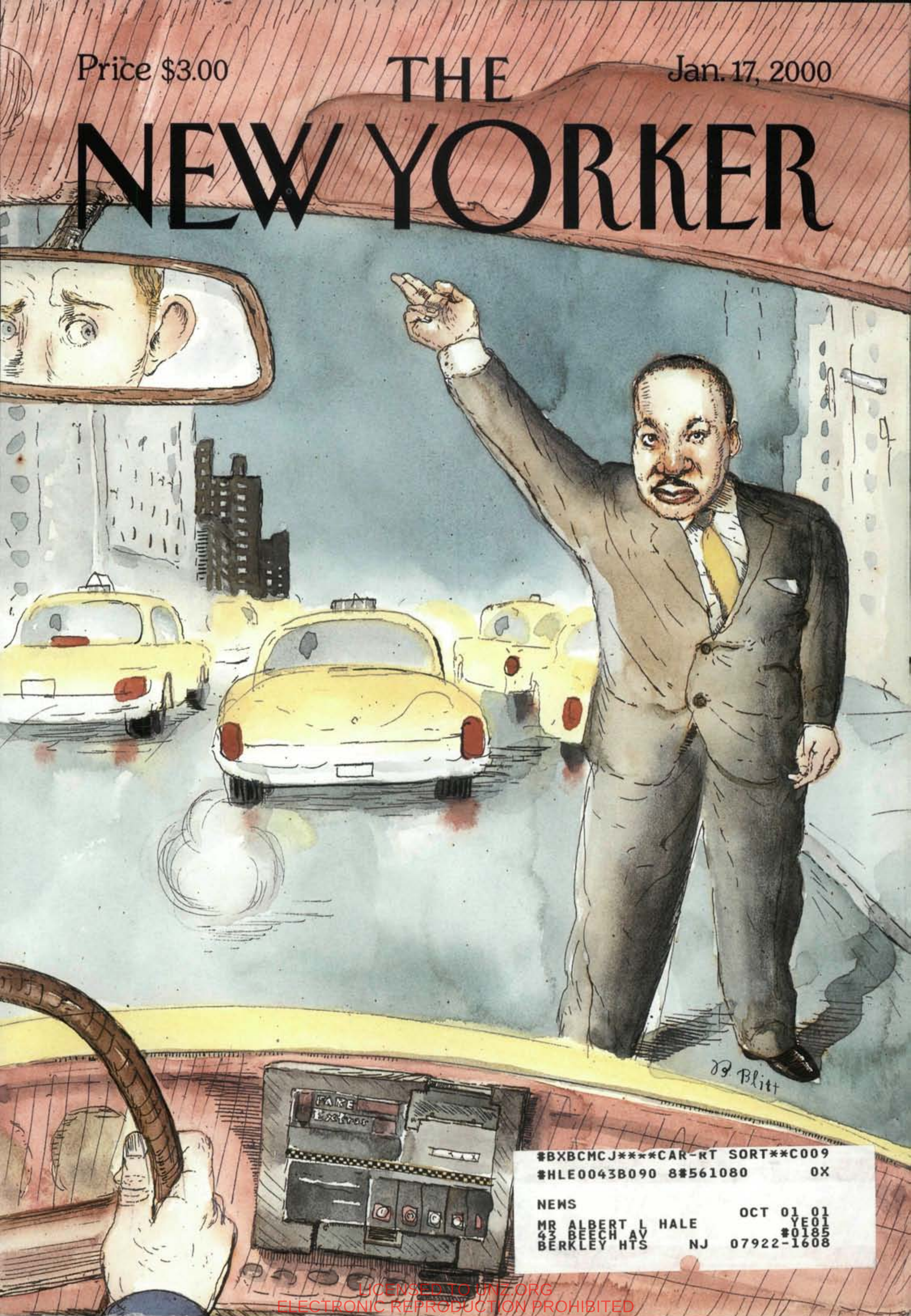
THE NEW YORKER

Jan. 17, 2000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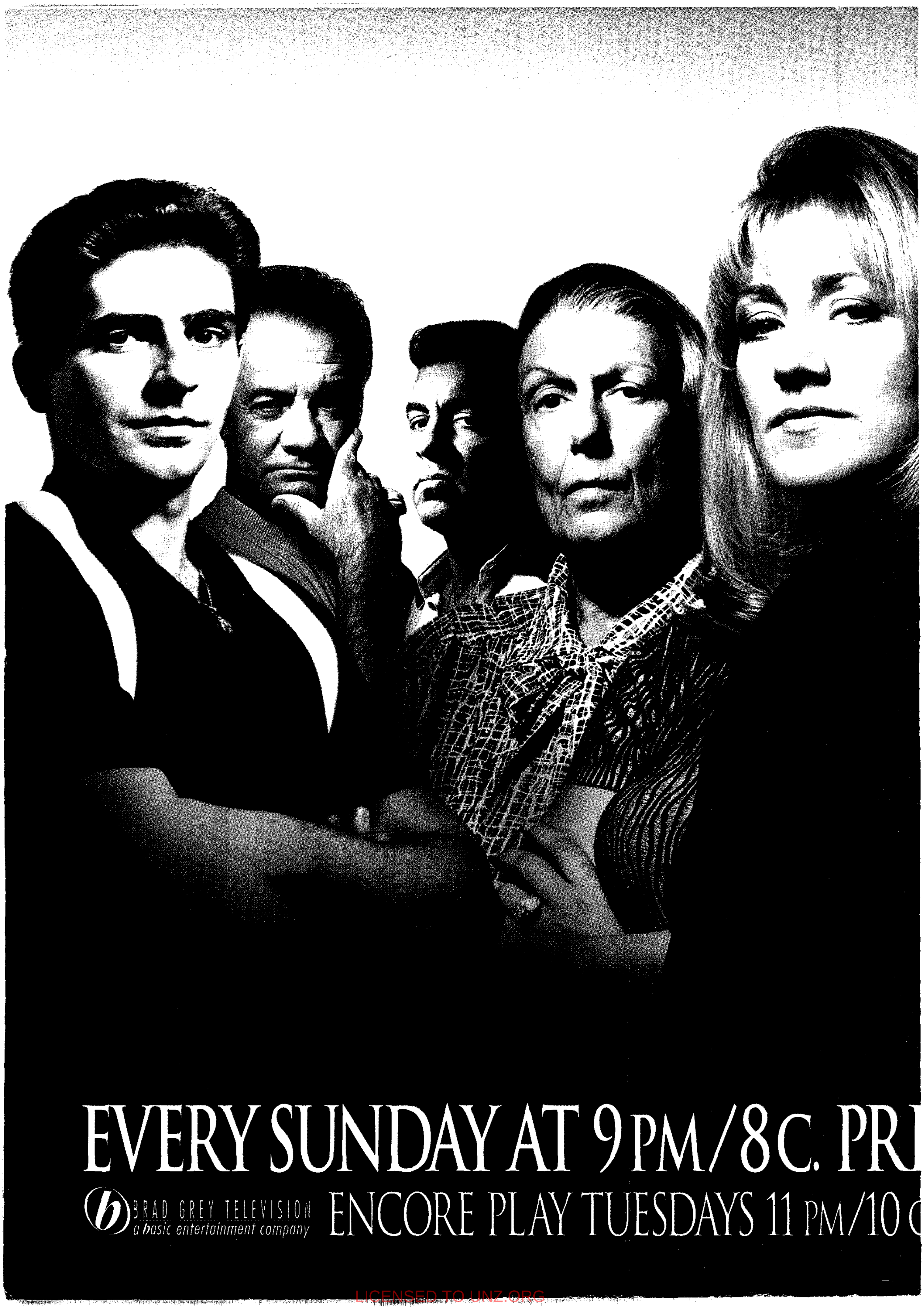
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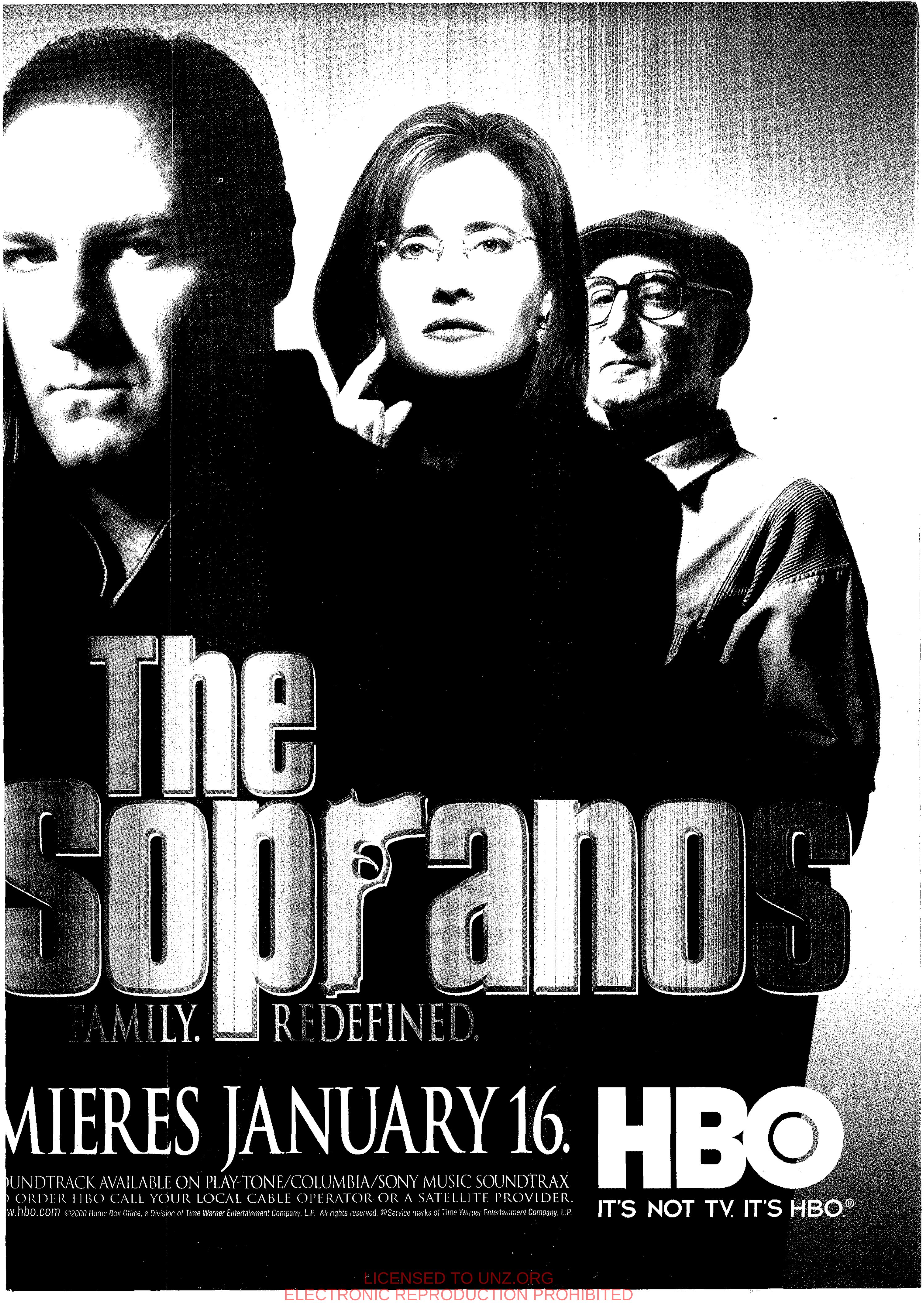

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THE NEW YORKER

JANUARY 17, 2000

THE MAIL 5

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN 6

THE TALK OF THE TOWN 23
Comment Alex Kotlowitz on executing children.
Et cetera Greeting the millennium; the race to thwart bioterrorism.

DEPARTMENTS
The Campaign Trail Flawed Hero . . . . *Joe Klein* 28
John McCain runs on what he's done wrong.

Shouts & Murmurs Totally Amazing Grace . . . . *Paul Rudnick* 35

Letter from Bangkok The Place to Disappear . . . . *Susan Orlean* 37
For a certain kind of traveller, it's the road at the end of the road.

ANNALS OF JUSTICE DNA on Trial . . . . *Peter J. Boyer* 42
The foolproof test that doesn't always work.

PROFILE An Eye for the New . . . . *Calvin Tomkins* 54
How Ileana Sonnabend helped shape contemporary art.

NAPLES POSTCARD The Best of the Worsted . . . . *Michael Specter* 65
Where to find the ultimate suit.

FICTION "White Walls" . . . . *Tatyana Tolstaya* 68

THE CRITICS
The Sky Line New York's new planetarium . . . . *Paul Goldberger* 72
Books "Georgiana: Duchess of Devonshire" . . . . *Francine du Plessix Gray* 79
Briefly Noted 83
The Art World "Modern*Starts*" at MOMA . . . . *Peter Schjeldahl* 84
The Current Cinema "Holy Smoke," "Fantasia 2000" . . . . *Anthony Lane* 86

POEMS
"The Ancestor" . . . . *Paul Muldoon* 32
"From a Lecture Delivered in a Crosswind" . . . . *Lois Moyles* 60

THE BACK PAGE When in Rome . . . . *Roz Chast* 88

COVER *Hailing Dr. King, by Barry Blitt*

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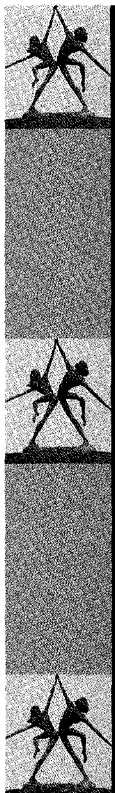

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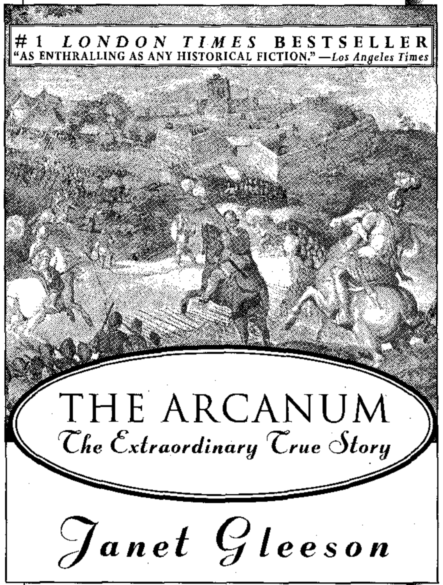
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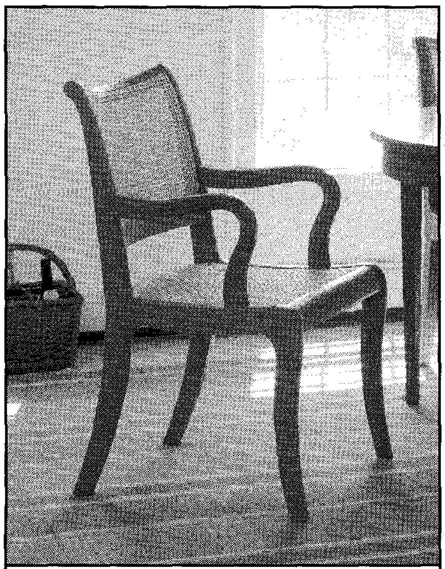

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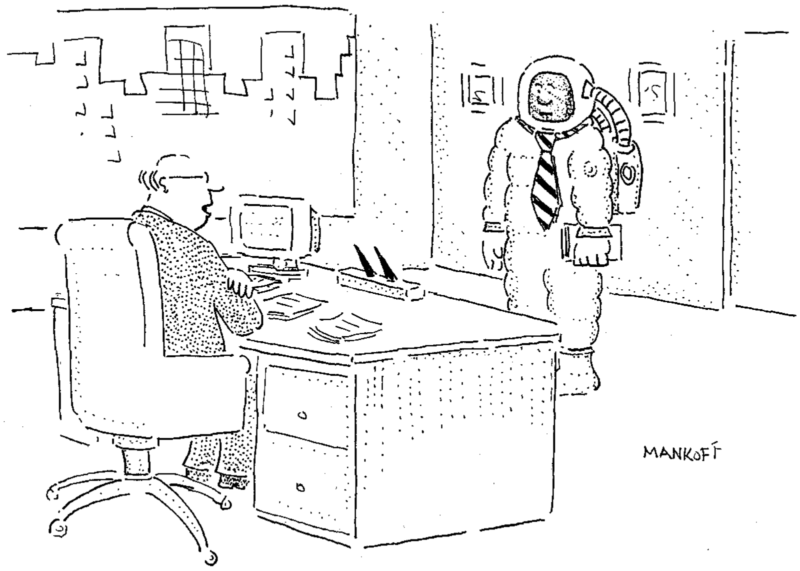

"You know, Burkhart, if you're so damn afraid of the flu maybe you should just stay home."

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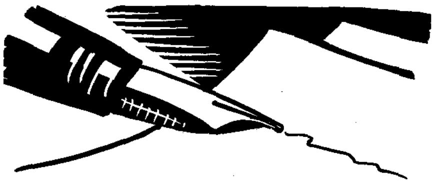

TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS?

Malcolm Gladwell's focus on business-to-consumer transactions on-line ("Clicks & Mortar," December 6th) leaves the larger portion of the dot-com revolution unexplored. While consumers are expected to have spent as much as twelve billion dollars on-line in 1999, business-to-business transactions are estimated at more than a hundred and nine billion dollars. The real revolution lies in how the Internet is enabling companies to interact more efficiently not only with customers but with suppliers, partners, and even their own employees.

Ed Zander
President and C.O.O., Sun Microsystems, Inc.
Palo Alto, Calif.

Internet investors have been taught that they should value the stocks of emerging companies based more on revenues than on profits. So the on-line drugstore I use charges less than Wal-Mart, gives me free shipping, and guarantees that the prices for things I buy regularly will never rise—not a recipe for profits, but it sure can bring in revenues. Rather than finding the next Microsoft, investors in companies like on-line drug stores may just be subsidizing my toothpaste and deodorant purchases. I'm happy to play the game as long as they are.

Mark Engerman
Concord, Mass.

CONAN THE GRAMMARIAN

In the midst of the holiday season, with all its garlanded opportunities for high-profile familial dysfunction, how appropriate that Charles McGrath's "*Details* Magazine Editing Test" (The Back Page, December 13th) should have poked fun at *The New Yorker's* boorish, leering younger brother in the Condé Nast publishing family. As *Details'* longest-serving copy editor, I thought I might clear up this family squabble by offering an illicit peek inside the actual *Details* Copy Desk Stylebook, thereby correcting the gross misconception that *Details* is nothing more than a beer 'n' babes rag.

For starters, while it is a fact that the words "C-cup" and "D-cup" do appear explicitly in the stylebook (with neither "A-cup" nor "B-cup" warranting a mention), the magazine's editorial concerns range far beyond women's chests. *Details'* policy on "-ass" constructions, for example, is quite well rounded: "We follow Web 10 [Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th Edition], but if it can't be found there, then hyphenate: 'dumb-ass,' 'candy-ass,' 'bad-ass,' and so on." I feel confident that, with the exception of certain Beverly Hills plastic surgeons specializing in posterior liposuction (see our March pull-out section), we at *Details* are the last word on American "-ass" constructions.

Perhaps *Details'* greatest contribution to modern American letters is to act as a kind of Conan the Grammarian, muscularly expanding traditional linguistic pedantry to address issues peculiar to today's unlettered (but trendy) youth. A spirit of inclusiveness runs, "nekkid" as a "mofo," throughout the *Details* Copy Desk Wordlist, a compilation of words used so frequently in the magazine as to require special attention by the copy-desk staff. Thanks to this list, "twentysomething" "Goths" have no need to slink around in lowercase like ordinary "booty"-shaking "boy toys," suffering from low self-esteem because a bunch of "wack," "A-list," oldster lexicographers with "comb-overs" don't deem them worthy of an initial capital letter. From "b-boys" to "grrrls," "headbangers" to "gangbangers" (gangsters, not sex fiends—they take a hyphen), the *Details* stylebooks bring convention to the unconventional. Does *Details* allow any "cyber-age" "playa" to go through life without a style of his very own? "Fuhgeddaboutit," "homey."

John Freeman Gill
Brooklyn, N.Y.

•

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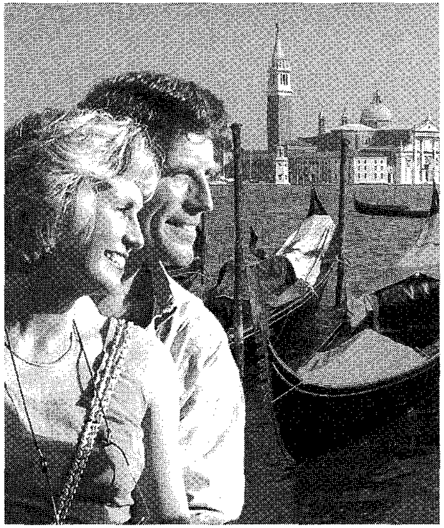

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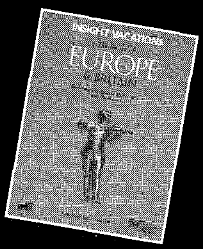

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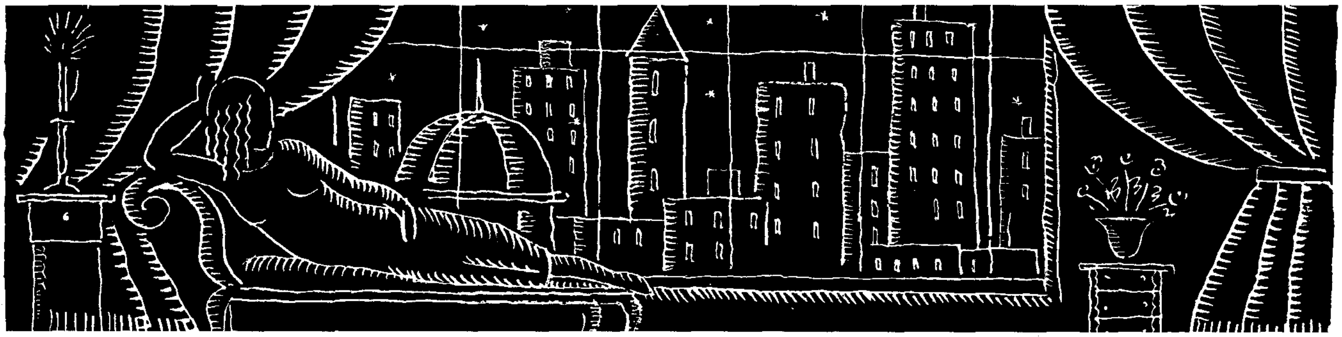

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Arms and the Man—Henry Czerny, Katie Finneran, and Paul Michael Valley lead the cast in a Roundabout Theatre production of Shaw's 1894 play, under the direction of Roger Rees. Previews begin Jan. 15. (Gramercy, 127 E. 23rd St. 777-4900.)

The Merry Wives of Windsor—The Pearl Theatre Company's staging of Shakespeare's comedy. Preview on Jan. 16. Opens Jan. 17 at 7. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

Some Assembly Required—The Target Margin Theatre's festival of new plays includes stagings of five works in progress: "Zulu Pet," by Kent Alexander; "Dick in London," by Cahir O'Doherty; "Innocent," by Nicholas Ridout; "Rook," by Kathy Hemingway Jones; and "The Anti-Muse," by Michael Brodsky. Opens Jan. 12 at 7:30 and continues through Jan. 30. (Present Company Theatorium, 198 Stanton St. 358-3657.)

Stopless—A mother, her two sons, and a stripper make up the cast of characters in a new play by David Deblinger. Preview on Jan. 12. Opens Jan. 13 at 8 and continues through Jan. 29. (Center Stage, 48 W. 21st St. 929-2228.)

Teahouse of the August Moon—From the Pan Asian Rep, John Patrick's 1953 play about post-Second World War Japan, adapted from the novel by Vern Sneider. In previews. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 279-4200.)

This Is a Test—A solo show written and performed by Michael D. Conway, in which a man looks back on his life on the night before receiving H.I.V.-test results. In previews Jan. 12-16. Opens Jan. 17 at 8. (Sanford Meisner, 164 Eleventh Ave., at 22nd St. 613-1682.)

Wrong Mountain—A new play by David Hirson ("La Bête"), starring Ron Rifkin as a bitter, unknown poet determined to demonstrate how easy it is to make it as a playwright. Two previews on Jan. 12. Opens Jan. 13 at 6:45. (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

Amadeus—From London, a revival of Peter Shaffer's drama, starring Michael Sheen as Mozart and David Suchet as Salieri. Sir Peter Hall is the director. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Another American: Asking & Telling—A one-man show written and performed by Marc Wolf, based on his interviews with gay and straight military personnel from the Second World War to the present. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200. Closes Jan. 30.)

The Bomb-Itty of Errors—A hip-hop adaptation of Shakespeare's "The Comedy of Errors." (45 Bleecker, 45 Bleecker St., at Lafayette St. 307-4100.)

The Countess—Gregory Murphy's play, which tells the story of how the nineteenth-century art critic John Ruskin's wife left him for the painter John Everett Millais, is a vivid exploration of the self-indulgent pleasures of small-mindedness (in this case, Ruskin's and his parents'). The script is funny and intelligent, if a bit overlong, and the cast does a wonderful job of revealing the characters' complete inability to communicate with each other, personally or artistically. (Samuel Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 594-2826.)

Dame Edna: The Royal Tour—Former housewife turned international entertainer Dame Edna Everage (the sublime comic creation of the Australian Dadaist and dandy Barry Humphries) is, to adopt her penchant for alliteration, a virago of vitriol, a harpy of happiness, a megastar of maliciousness. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/1/99.) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Dinner with Friends—Donald Margulies's new play concerns two upper-middle-class couples who have been married for a dozen or so years; one of them survives the wear and tear of marriage, and the other doesn't. It's a perceptive depiction of the mystery and the mundanity of marriage, and the cast give well-rounded performances. Directed by Daniel Sullivan. (Variety Arts, 110 Third Ave., at 14th St. 239-6200.)

Dirty Blonde—Claudia Shear ("Blown Sideways Through Life") stars in a play she wrote, about two single New Yorkers who happen to meet at the grave of Mae West. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475.)

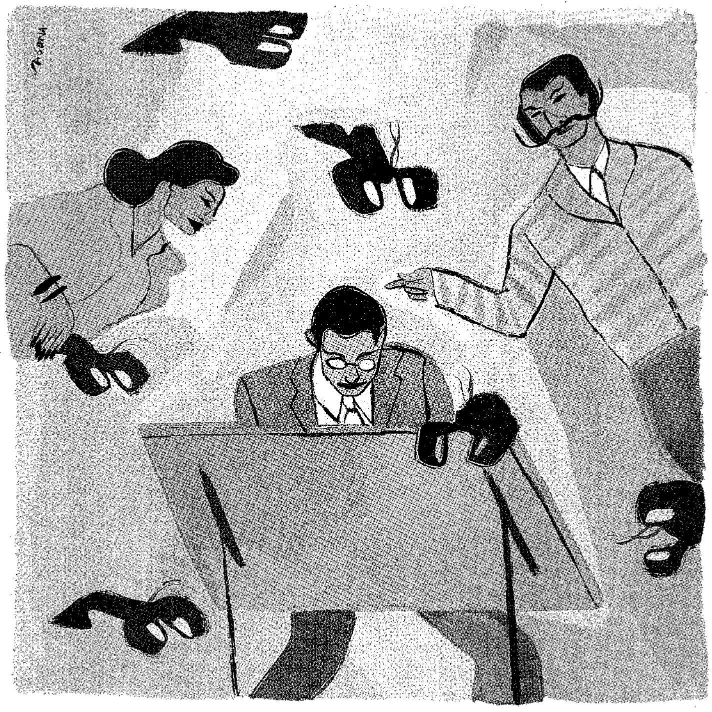
Elsa Edgar—A pair of monologues in which the renowned society gossip Elsa Maxwell and C.I.A. director J. Edgar Hoover provide a fascinating look at the way secrets became public currency during the early years of this century, as American culture became increasingly P.R.-addled. The often insightful and funny script was written by Bob Kingdom with Neil Bartlett; Mr. Kingdom also performs—in order—Elsa with heartbreaking lucidity, Edgar too broadly, the conclusion movingly. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052. Closes Jan. 16.)

The Exact Center of the Universe—An amiable comedy by Joan Vail Thorne, lightly seasoned with insight, about a classic Southern dragon-lady mother (Frances Sternhagen, in a beautiful performance). (Century Theatre, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

Fully Committed—This hilarious one-man comedy, a tribute to starving actors slaving away in the restaurant "industry" in order to make ends meet, has reopened at a new theatre. Mark Setlock plays a lovable reservations clerk at an unnamed tony Manhattan restaurant, who deals with the daily deluge of calls from dying-to-be-guests. Developed by Setlock and the playwright Becky Mode. (Cherry Lane Theatre, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200.)

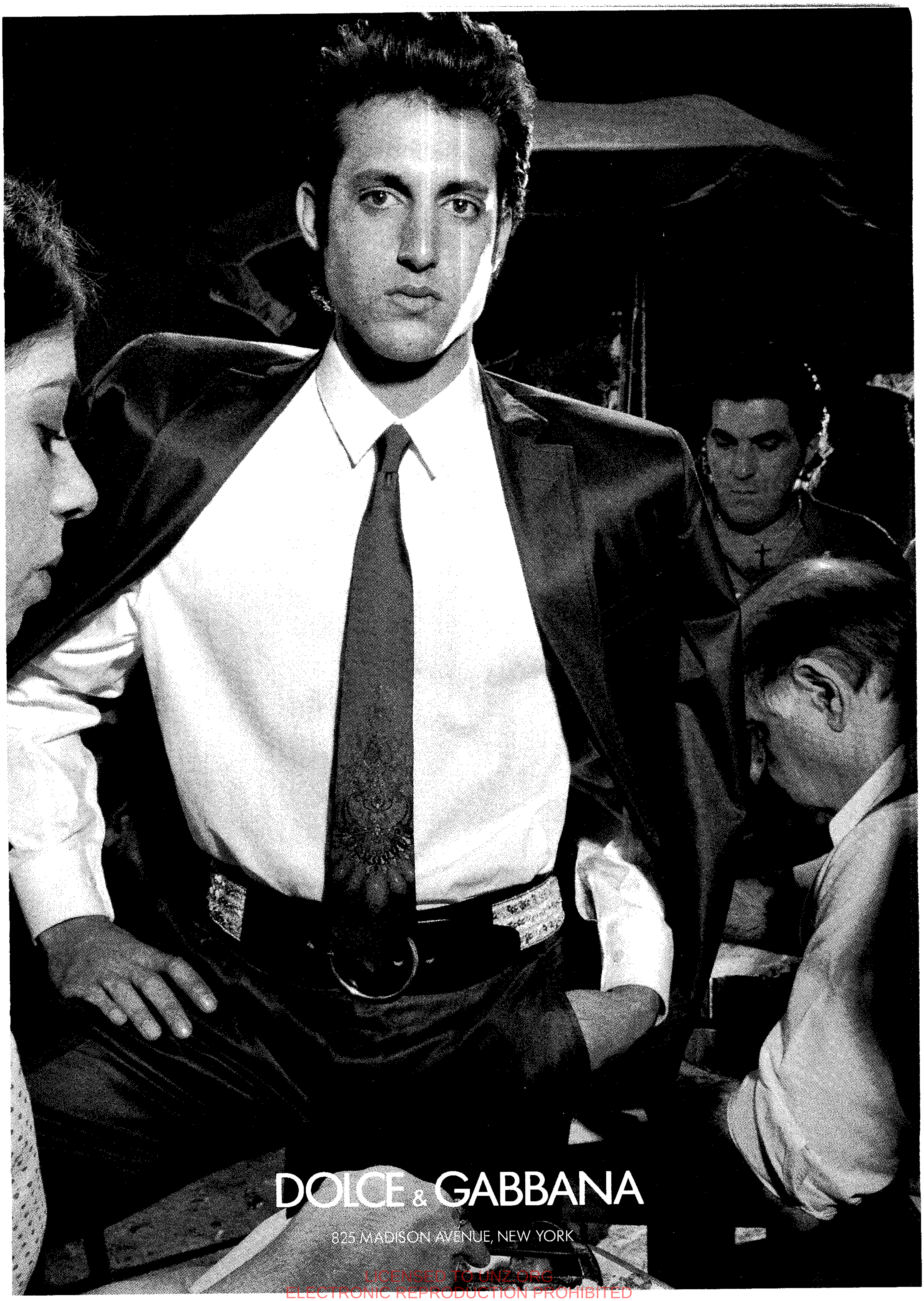
Inappropriate—A rock musical based on true stories from the lives of teens. (Theatre Row Theatre, 424 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

The Irish . . . and How They Got That Way—A brief engagement of a revue by Frank McCourt, author of the best-selling memoir "Angela's Ashes." It's a generally good-natured if somewhat choppy amalgam of historical tidbits, quotations from letters and speeches, and Irish songs from the past two centuries, performed by a versatile and charming cast of six singers and musicians. Deftly directed by Charlotte Moore. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737. Closes Jan. 30.)



"Lobster Alice," by Kira Obolensky, at Playwrights Horizons.

MARINA SAGONA


DOLCE & GABBANA
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Kevin Chamberlin, Claudia Shear, and Robert Stillman, in "Dirty Blonde."

Jackie Mason: Much Ado About Everything—The comic is back on Broadway with a new show, in which he explores the problems with Bill Gates, the Internet, Y2K, Bill and Hillary, Rudy Giuliani, and Jesse Ventura, among others. (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

James Joyce's The Dead—Playwrights Horizons' musical version of the short story has moved to Broadway's Belasco Theatre for a limited-run encore engagement. (11/8/99) (111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Jet Lag—A live-action-and-video production by the Builders Association, based on two true stories, about the perils of modern travel. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Closes Jan. 15.)

Keep Bangin'—"Stomp" showed that you can cook up an evening of theatre out of percussion alone, but this show proves it better. The ten-man cast is led by Jared Crawford, who, with his million-toothed smile, firestorm of dreads, and rare genius, lifts the whole thing into a kind of art heaven. (Players Theatre, 115 MacDougal St. 254-5076.)

Kiss Me, Kate—This revival of the Cole Porter musical, a play within a play about the backstage goings on of a production of "The Taming of the Shrew," represents the highest level of theatrical collaboration currently on Broadway. The hero is the veteran British director Michael Blakemore, whose success lies to a large extent in marshalling the talents of his production team. Besides his own vivid stage pictures, he has inspired the costume designer, Martin Pakledinaz, the lighting designer, Peter Kaczorowski, the choreographer, Kathleen Marshall, and the set designer, Robin Wagner, to the theatrical equivalent of a field day. And yet, with all its admirable expertise and its various delights, the production is oddly earthbound: it comes down to the vexing issue of chemistry. The leads, Marin Mazzie and Brian Stokes Mitchell, are expert players, but they are not—in the true meaning of the words—star performers, the kind who bring something larger than life to musical stories. (11/29/99) (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Lobster Alice—A comedy by Kira Obolensky, set in mid-forties Hollywood, in which the arrival of Salvador Dali (David Patrick Kelly) inspires a creatively blocked animator (Reg Rogers) and his assistant (Jessica Hecht). (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes Jan. 23.)

North Atlantic—Willem Dafoe, Steve Buscemi, and Kate Valk star in the Wooster Group's multimedia play, set aboard an aircraft carrier during the Cold War. (Performing Garage, 33 Wooster St. 966-3651.)

Pathologic Theatre Festival—A retrospective of plays by the Italian performance artist Dario D'Ambrosi. Jan. 12 at 8: "Volare." . . . ¶ Jan. 13-15 at 7:30 and Jan. 16 at 3 and 7: "Prince of Madness." (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 475-7710.)

The Price—In Arthur Miller's 1968 play, a failed, dutiful brother, who thinks that life has given him a bad deal, cuts another bad deal, this time with a furniture dealer. But when his successful sibling turns up, the play becomes a negotiation about their family history, an agreement that can't be reached. As the rivalry is played out, the audience watches the riveting spectacle of a man clinging to a self-destructive illusion, despite all evidence to the contrary. As a metaphor for our culture of complaint, it ain't bad. And neither are the performances. "The Price" is not a waste of time, which is saying a lot on Broadway these days. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Putting It Together—A revue celebrating the songs of Stephen Sondheim, starring Carol Burnett. Directed by Eric D. Schaeffer. (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

The Rainmaker—As wholesome and satisfying as a glass of milk, N. Richard Nash's 1954 drama is a sunny, old-fashioned valentine of a play that hits on big themes (loneliness, trust, love) with a light touch. Starbuck, played by an exuberant Woody Harrelson, is a flashy evangelist of rain who arrives at a family farm in the throes of drought and dissatisfaction; he inadvertently solves both problems with a confidence game that works out for everyone. Jayne Atkinson is wonderful as the sensible spinster who tries to resist Starbuck's charms, as are Randle Mell, as her stiff would-be suitor, and Jerry Hardin, as her well-intentioned father. A confection, a delight. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100. Closes Jan. 23.)

Saturday Night Fever—The musical, based on the 1977 film. (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

Sex—The 1926 show that launched Mae West's career by putting her in jail. She wrote and starred in this brazen melodrama, about a prostitute who's on the lookout for a rich man but finds happiness instead. The play is certainly dated, but the cast is game and the evening is fun; the double- (and single-) entendre songs that open the second act are a real delight. The director, Elyse Singer, does a fine logistical job in very tight quarters, but she adds distracting snippets from West's trial to the script, as a prologue to each act. Mae West, even incarnated by someone else (in this case, Carolyn Baeumler), doesn't need explaining. (Gershwin Hotel Living Room, 7 E. 27th St. 439-8112. Closes Jan. 31.)

Sexual Perversity in Chicago—The Atlantic Theatre Company's all-Mamet season continues with the playwright's 1976 comedy, accompanied by his 1976 one-act "Duck Variations." (336 W. 20th St. 645-1242.)

Swing!—A musical salute to the genre, directed and choreographed by Lynne Taylor-Corbett. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

The Vagina Monologues—Eve Ensler's one-woman show is based on interviews she conducted with two hundred women about their vaginas. There's a certain amount of shtick involved, but most of the stories she tells are touching and memorable. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

Velvetville—The latest solo puppet play by Paul Zaloom. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Closes Jan. 23.)

The Voysey Inheritance—The Mint Theatre presents an encore engagement of Harley Granville-Barker's 1905 drama, which the company originally staged last spring. (311 W. 43rd St. 315-0231. Closes Feb. 13.)

Waiting in the Wings—In the best of Noël Coward's postwar plays, old gallant theatricals duke it out in a retirement home, where they fire off some terrific one-liners. The set is too spick-and-span for musty England in the sixties, and some of director Michael Langham's casting leaves a bit to be desired, but the evening has its old-time pleasures. Although the play itself is somewhat creaky, the pros who bring it to life here aren't: Bette Henritze, Elizabeth Wilson, Rosemary Harris, Dana Ivey, and the evergreen Lauren Bacall. La Bacall is just too glamorous and too famous for the faded company her character keeps; the day she goes to the retirement home is the day gallstones become jewelry. (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

War of the Worlds—The Saratoga International Theatre Institute's staged version of Howard Koch's radio play, based on the H. G. Wells novel and made famous in 1938 by Orson Welles and the Mercury Theatre. Jan 12-13 at 8. Continues through Jan. 20. (West Bank Café, 407 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

Y2K—As up to the minute as the Melissa virus and the Explore.Zip worm, Arthur Kopit's drama brings news of the cyber-abuse of privacy and shows us how personal history can be rewritten at a computer hacker's whim. A young cyber-subversive named Costa Astrakhan (the furtive Erik Jensen) invades the lives of the Eliots (James Naughton and Patricia Kalember), a suave Park Avenue couple. He is a fiction editor at Random House, she works in the ceramics department at Sotheby's, but Astrakhan supplies them with compelling new profiles: he as a child pornographer, she as a porn star. Strategically, Kopit wants to challenge the solidity of both the Eliots' and the audience's sense of reality. Nothing is what it seems. But it is also part of the playwright's plan to put us exactly where the two anguished protagonists sit—at first bemused, then outraged, then no longer quite sure even of their coherence. Underneath the cyber-thriller aspect of the story, Kopit's sense of the bewildering mystery and fragility of relationships comes through loud and chillingly clear. (12/20/99) (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200).

MARTIN SCHOELLER/SABA

LONG RUNS

ANNIE GET YOUR GUN: Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100. . . . **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4747. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CABARET:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CHICAGO:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **DE LA GUARDA:** Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FOOTLOOSE:** Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY:** Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200. . . . **FOSSE:** Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH:** Jane Street Theatre, Hotel Riverview Ballroom, 113 Jane St. 239-6200. . . . **I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200 . . . . **JEKYLL & HYDE:** Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **LATE-NITE CATECHISM:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE LION KING:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **OVER THE RIVER AND THROUGH THE WOODS:** John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **RAGTIME:** Ford Center for the Performing Arts, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100 (Closes Jan. 16.). . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **SECRETS EVERY SMART TRAVELER SHOULD KNOW:** Ibis, 327 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. (Closes Jan. 16.). . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **WIT:** Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.

DANCE

New York City Ballet—Jan. 12 at 8: "Episodes," "Mozartiana," and "Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto No. 2." . . ¶ Jan. 13 and Jan. 18 at 8, Jan. 15 at 2, and Jan. 16 at 3: "Swan Lake." . . ¶ Jan. 14 at 8: "Concerto Barocco," "Valse-Fantaisie," "Mozartiana," and "In G Major." . . ¶ Jan. 15 at 8: "In G Major," "In the Night," and "Fancy Free." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Through Feb. 27.)

Mark Morris Dance Group—The eighteen-member company appears in five works, including the premières of Morris's solo "Greek to Me," the duet "Silhouettes," and "Dancing Honeymoon," set to such thirties-era ditties as "A Cup of Coffee, a Sandwich, and You." "My Party" and "The Argument" complete the program. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. Jan. 11-14 at 8, Jan. 15 at 2 and 8 and Jan. 16 at 2.)

"Altogether Different"—Three weeks of performances by seven contemporary-dance companies, with programs that, in every case, include a New York première and often additional seasoned works. Jan. 11 and Jan. 13-14 at 8: **33 FAINTING SPELLS,** in "Sorrow's Sister." . . ¶ Jan. 12 at 8 and Jan. 16 at 2 and 7:30: **LULA WASHINGTON DANCE THEATRE,** in "Mahal Dances," "Tasting Muddy Waters," "Songs of the Disinherited," and "01997-8." . . ¶ Jan. 15 at 8: **DANCE BY NEIL GREENBERG,** in "This Is What Happened" and "Sequel." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800.)

"Paradise"—Sarah Skaggs Dance presents a work intended to blur the boundaries between dance concert and dance party, with forty-five minutes of performance (to dance tracks chosen by d.j. Steven Harvey) that segue into a dance jamboree, in which audience members, urged on by twenty ice-breakers whose ages range from five to eighty-three, join the performers on the gymnasium floor. (St. Patrick's Youth Center, 268 Mulberry St., near Houston St. 674-8194. Jan. 15 at 7 and 9.)

"Falling"—Four choreographers and a choreographic team share a program with works by Freedman/Coleman Dance Company ("Falling" and "Dent"), Yanira Castro ("Una Sola Sombra Larga"), Karinne Keithley ("I Wish I Was a Sailor"), Fritha Pengelly ("Paths Other," a duet she performs with Rebecca Chisman), and JoAnna Mendl Shaw ("Big Belly"). (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Jan. 13-15 at 8:30.)

"Csárdás: The Tango of the East"—The Budapest Ensemble, under the direction of Zoltan Zsurafski, presents the folk dance of the Carpathian basin. (Lehman Concert Hall, 250 Bedford Park Blvd. W., the Bronx. 718-960-8833. Jan. 16 at 2.)

"Breakdown"—The choreographer Nicholas Leichter offers six works, including "Good Cop/Bad Cop," a duet with Clare Byrne, and "Worth," a sextet of touchingly awkward erotic dancers. (The Flea, 41 White St. 226-0051. Jan. 13-16 at 8. Through Jan. 30.)

"Social Dances"—The Jody Oberfelder Dance Projects presents playful variations on touch dancing, from the waltz to the lambada. (Dixon Place at Vineyard 26, 309 E. 26th St. 532-1546. Jan. 14-15 at 8. Through Jan. 30.)

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

Cyrus Chestnut Trio—Equal parts Art Tatum and Count Basie, this pianist is a maniacal two-handed speed demon who can turn around and deliver the goods with a single note. With the canyon-voiced vocalist Kevin Mahogany. (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. 346-1715. Jan. 13 at 8.)

Harry Connick, Jr.—Once considered New Orleans' answer to Sinatra, Connick still possesses fearsome piano chops, as well as old-school charisma. He's diluted his talent with a few ill-advised acting roles (he once played a psycho killer), but in his live appearances he's a real pro. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. Jan. 13 at 8.)

Ben Allison & Medicine Wheel—One of the most interesting of the new-jazz ensembles that formed during the nineties, Ben Allison and Medicine Wheel is distinguished by the leader's bantering bass work and his adventurous writing, which gives saxophonists Ted Nash and Michael Blake and pianist Frank Kimbrough plenty to sink their teeth into. (Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. 708-9480. Jan. 14 at 5:30.)

Anthrax—Queens' finest speed-metal combo, best remembered for a brief collaboration with the members of Public Enemy, returns to its homeland to bash heads. (Roxy, 515 W. 18th St. 307-7171. Jan. 18 at 8.)

CLUBS

(Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Arlene Grocery, 95 Stanton St., between Ludlow and Orchard Sts. (358-1633)—A narrow, dimly lit renovated bodega that's the ideal environment for three to five bands a night who aren't quite up from obscurity.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Jan. 14: The country punk of Chapel Hill's **TRAILER BRIDE,** which is led by former Pussy Teeth bassist Melissa Swingle. Jan. 15: **DOC WATSON.** The majority of folk revivalists perform as if they had formaldehyde in their veins, but the septuagenarian blind guitarist Watson (whose roots are in rockabilly) has an emotional range that rivals the five-century span of his repertoire (everything from Elizabethan ballads to backwater blues and country standards). He's a grand old man who sings with a wit, vigor, and virtuosity that should be the envy of many a younger man.

Bowery Ballroom, 6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Jan. 13: After getting bounced last year from the label V2, guitarist and singer Howe Gelb's long-running alternative-country-punk conglomerate **GIANT SAND** returns to its independent roots. At the moment the group's latest album, "Chore of Enchantment," is available only on its eponymous Web site and at its live shows, but it will be released this spring by the spritely little Chicago label Thrill Jockey.

Brownies, 169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—Jan. 15: **CHAMPALE,** singer-songwriter Mark Rozzo's unusually flexible and inventive ensemble, covers the territory from meditative spaciness to full-bore freak-out. With **A DON PIPER SITUATION,** a versatile pop trio led by Austin transplant Don Piper, whose gimlet-eyed songcraft sparked a justly deserved big-label bidding war in 1997; alas, due to continuing record-industry jitters, the Situation's long-awaited début remains in limbo. Also on this delightful triple bill is the singer-songwriter **PETER SALETT,** whose talent for engaging narratives is complemented nicely by a rich voice and a set of thick sideburns.

Fez, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—Jan. 17: **THE BILLY NAYER SHOW.** Cory McAbee, the lead singer of this San Francisco combo with a Left Coast cult following, dresses in dark suits and hits the stage like a schizophrenic G-man. He can be collected and calm, but then he's howling, ferreting out clues about love and longing. The **MINGUS BIG BAND** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Jan. 15: **GUIDED BY VOICES.** The Dayton-based lo-fi combo whose ringleader, Robert Pollard, picked up his flair for finger painting with lyrics as a fourth-grade teacher. The group's latest album, "Do the Collapse," is produced by Ric Ocasek, and it's their slickest, most fully formed collection to date. Jan. 17: Former Marillion vocalist **FISH.** . . . ¶ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday, with sets from eight until midnight. For information on the society, call 696-9737.

Joe's Pub, 425 Lafayette St. (539-8777)—Jan. 14: Onetime Letterman staff writer, *Spy* contributor, and jingle composer **DAVID YAZBEK** stops by with his brand of smart, catchy, XTC-grade pop. Jan. 16: **CHOCOLATE GENIUS** is Marc Anthony Thompson, a vocalist with a gift for incisive personal narratives and an emotionally keyed-up delivery. Jan. 18: The ambient disk jockey and *Paper*-magazine columnist **D.J. SPOOKY** gets a little help from downtown guitarist **ARTO LINDSAY** and other friends.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Jan. 13: **JAD FAIR,** half of the seventies avant-garde rock band Half Japanese, mixes it up with bassist and producer **KRAMER.** Jan. 14: The whimsical power pop of Boston's **PAPAS FRITAS** and the neo-psychedelia of **LADYBUG TRANSISTOR.** Jan. 15: **THE RED KRAYOLA,** one of rock and roll's longest-running underground acts, dates back to 1966. Its survival is owed to the strength and individuality of its leader, Mayo Thompson, rather than to any commercial success. There's a reason you haven't heard of this band: much of its music sounds like noise. Its latest release, "Fingerpainting," continues its proudly uncommercial tradition. Jan. 18: The exceptional Cuban singer **JUAN-CARLOS FORMELL.**

Makor, 35 W. 67th St. (601-1000)—Jan. 15: **TONY TRISCHKA,** one of the world's finest banjo players.

Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-798-0406)—Jan. 13: **THE RED KRAYOLA** (see the Knitting Factory). Jan. 14: **GIANT SAND** (see the Bowery Ballroom). Jan. 16: Former Dream Syndicate front man **STEVE WYNN.** With **TRAILER BRIDE** (see the Bottom Line).

S.O.B.'s, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—In the seventies, while many of his R. & B. peers were blissfully succumbing to disco fever, singer-pianist (and poet-novelist) GIL SCOTT-HERON (Jan. 16) was fusing jazz and funk textures with sobering political rap. He's been on tour ever since. Dining.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through Jan. 16: Pop vocalist CHAKA KHAN and her jazz band. Dining.

Internet Café, 82 E. 3rd St. (614-0747)—DREW GRESS (Jan. 14-15) brings the same smarts and sharp musicianship to his own band, JAGGED SKY—featuring acclaimed downtowners altoist DAVE BINNEY, guitarist BEN MONDER, and drummer KENNY WOLLENSON—that he displays in his usual role as bassist for such disparate players as Fred Hersch, Tim Berne, and Don Byron.

Iridium, 48 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through Jan. 16: BOBBY HUTCHERSON with the CEDAR WALTON TRIO. In jazz, the vibraphone has never enjoyed the status of, say, the saxophone, trumpet, or even the guitar, but the players who have coaxed beautiful music from its metallic bars constitute a rare breed of lyrical, often daring, improvisers. Hutcherson is one of the masters. He may never be as on the edge as he was in the sixties, when his playing on Eric Dolphy's "Out to Lunch" or his own "Components" and "Stick Up!" brought the vibraphone into the avant-garde; mainstream modal bop is his language now. Yet on a good night Hutcherson reconfirms that the vibes can take on the tonal power and expressiveness of the most oratorical jazz horn. He has the advantage here of being supported by Walton's seasoned piano trio. Mondays belong to electric-guitar innovator LES PAUL.

Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Jan. 12-16: DON BYRON, the eclectic clarinettist, goes Latin with his ensemble Music for Six Musicians. The virtuoso reedman, who flits from klezmer to free jazz to classical and beyond with ease, has also been working with Latin players since he was a teenager—expertise and imagination are givens. Dining.

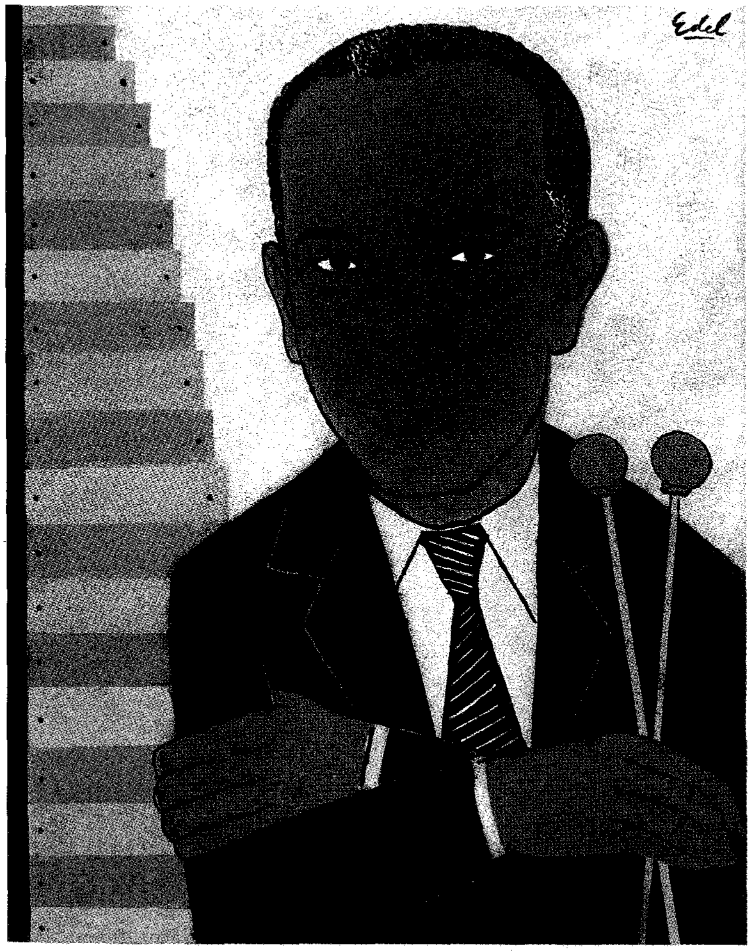
Joe's Pub, 425 Lafayette St. (539-8777)—A rough and ready trombonist who came up strong in the early-eighties, CRAIG HARRIS (here Jan. 15) has kept both his passion and his commitment to individualized expression just a few steps outside the mainstream. Harris will be joined by his longtime cohort, tenor saxophonist DAVID MURRAY.

Knickerbocker, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—Jan. 12-15: DARYL SHERMAN and JOE TEMPERLEY. She knows more Duke Ellington songs than any singing pianist around; he played with the great man's orchestra. Sherman and baritone saxophonist Temperley make felicitious music together; they will undoubtedly keep the Duke lovefest going, while also touching upon the best of prewar pop.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Jan. 13-15: LEE KONITZ WITH THE AXIS STRING QUARTET. The most entrancing alto saxophonist alive may have celebrated his seventieth birthday a few years ago, but Konitz's youthful quest for experimentation and stringent lyricism is as pronounced as ever. Interacting with a lean string quartet, Konitz can display all his astonishing improvisational powers. Jan. 16: JOE MORRIS AND MANY RINGS. Detail and clarity rather than expressionist bombast are the m.o. for avant-jazz guitarist Morris, an assiduous stylist who's carved out his own niche in the downtown scene.

Red Blazer, 32 W. 37th St. (947-6428)—STAN RUBIN'S BIG BAND, featuring vocalist CARY HOFFMAN, holds court on Thursdays with a program of songs made famous by Frank Sinatra.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—Since his boot-camp days with the late, lamented drummer Art Taylor, saxophonist ABRAHAM BURTON (here through Jan. 16) has grown into his beefy tone; he's even switched from alto to tenor to find the best expression for his robust playing. Dining.



Bobby Hutcherson, at Iridium.

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Jazz offspring are doing it for themselves, as proved by saxophonists Joshua Redman and Ravi Coltrane, and by pianist KENNY DREW, JR., who's here with his trio through Jan. 16. With his florid dashes and prodigious technical displays, Drew doesn't much remind you of his father, Kenny, the adroit, tasteful bebop pianist. Throwing both arms around a tune, the younger Drew reveals the gothic elements of the jazz repertoire. The VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA holds sway on Mondays.

Zinc Bar, 90 W. Houston St. (477-8337)—Whether blowing tank-force tenor sax with the Mingus Big Band, or making lyrical sketches on a Kip Hanrahan recording (to mention just two of his myriad projects over the past decade), JOHN STUBBLEFIELD (here Jan. 11-12) can be counted on to make music that is at once intelligent and impassioned. Saturdays and Sundays feature Brazilian jazz.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—"Only the Best," the title of an exhibition of eighty works from the Gulbenkian Museum in Lisbon, may sound like fatuous P.R., but the show makes good on its promise. The founder of the collection, the Armenian oil magnate Calouste Sarkis Gulbenkian (1869-1955), known as Mr. Five Percent for the fee he retained for helping reorganize oil companies in the Middle East, began collecting as a child, starting with antique coins; by the time of his death he had amassed a princely trove of nearly six thousand works of art, from the ancient Egyptians to the Impressionists. Gulbenkian didn't have an adventurous eye, but he certainly had a discriminating one. The show's many highlights include examples of Ming porcelain, Turkish carpets, and rococo silver, as well as exceptional paintings by Watteau, Fragonard, Rubens, Gainsborough, Turner, and Manet. It's almost a relief to find a few pieces, such as a bland life-size statue of Apollo by Houdon, that are second-rate. Through Feb. 27. . . . ¶ From Elvis Presley's gold lamé suit, visibly worn at the knees, to the varied sartorial inspirations of Mick, Cher, Diana, and Sonny, "Rock Style" at the Costume Institute offers an adoring MTV-style walk down Golden Oldie Lane. Among the notable outfits is the magnificently weird jumpsuit of quilted vinyl worn by David Bowie for his "Ziggy Stardust" tour. Designed by Kansai Yamamoto but clearly inspired by early Frank Stella, it's a sort of theatrically hermaphroditic incarnation of sixties minimalism. Other highlights include dresses made from turquoise ostrich feathers (Cher) and razor blades (Deborah Harry), along with Madonna's ever-provocative pinnacled bodices. After so much gaudiness, the real shocker is a mannequin dressed, in retail flannel and black denim, as Bruce Springsteen. Through March 19. . . . ¶ "Sean Scully on Paper." Through March 12. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—"Modern Starts" comprises three shows featuring works drawn from MOMA's permanent collection, all focussed on the years 1880-1920. "People" runs through Feb. 1; "Places" and "Things" through March 14. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—Selections from the permanent collection are on display. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—Part two of "The American Century" is a vast improvement over its predecessor, and not just because American art gathered momentum after the Second World War. The exhibition design, as a whole, is clearer: film clips and "historical" displays have been segregated to small side rooms so they don't compete directly with the nearly seven hundred art works. On the upper floors, curator Lisa

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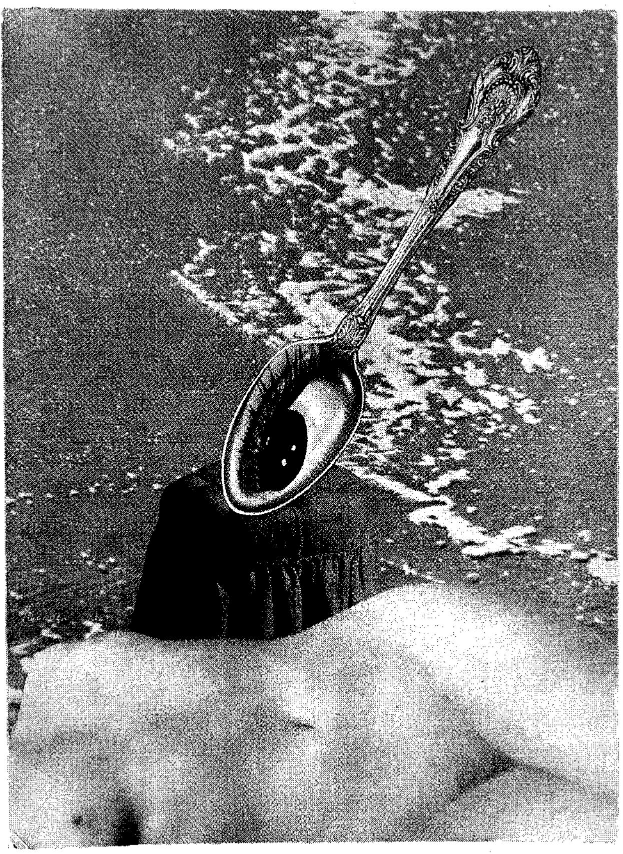
Phillips succeeds in making a familiar story fresh. The Abstract Expressionist gallery is strong, and the appearance of a Chuck Close portrait in a room devoted to minimalism is smartly provocative. Only in the later rooms do the skewed priorities and omissions begin to become apparent. From this show you could learn a lot about television sitcoms of the seventies, but you would never know, for example, that the decade witnessed a significant revival of representational painting. The exhibition ends with a whimper: can the nineties really have been as sterile a decade as it seems here? Through Feb. 13. (Open Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)



"After the Low Tide," by Frantisek Vobecky, at Ubu.

Whitney Museum at Philip Morris, 120 Park Ave., at 42nd St. (878-2550)—Lee Boroson's "Underpass" is a bright blue, nearly weightless public sculpture that rises from fourteen feet at its lowest point to a full height of more than forty feet and hovers above the leafy corporate atrium. At first glance, it looks stunningly goofy, like a cross between an air mattress and a freeway cloverleaf. But it's also slyly site-specific: the sloping central trajectory of the piece echoes that of the actual highway ramp (the Grand Central Station overpass) visible outside the atrium window. Striking and yet flamboyantly harmless, this Brobdingnagian crib toy proclaims Boroson the cheerful alternative to Richard Serra. Through March 17. (Open weekdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 7:30.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—*National Geographic* meets the East Village in "Body Art: Marks of Identity," which features Pre-Columbian nose ornaments from Peru next to contemporary photographs of the pierced and tattooed natives of New York and San Francisco. Through May 29. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"Eastman Johnson: Painting America" is a fascinating retrospective exhibition, the first in more than twenty-five years, of Winslow Homer's greatest rival. In many ways, the two Yankee painters were similar: both trained in Boston print shops, painted firsthand scenes of the Civil War, and made pioneering images of newly emancipated slaves. In their time, Johnson, twelve years older, was by far the more established and successful artist, and several of Homer's best-loved early canvases (notably "Snap the Whip") were almost certainly modelled on paintings by him. In later life, however, Johnson settled into a sentimental tidiness, delighting in modest delicacies of chiaroscuro, texture, and color. "Of all our artists he has the most coquetry of manipulation," Henry James wrote. There are dozens of impressive works here, including his masterpiece "The Cranberry Pickers," but none that really belie James's gentle dismissal. Through Feb. 6. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Dia Center for the Arts, 548 W. 22nd St. (989-5566)—For the next six months, the museum's handsome, barnlike annex will showcase a piece from 1976 by the late, pioneering minimalist Donald Judd. Judd adamantly banished allusion and metaphor from his art, preferring that the form and materials stand on their own merits. These fifteen variations on a plywood box—each five feet square and three feet high—combine rigor with sensuousness to an effect that is almost sacramental. Through June 18. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

Jewish Museum, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (423-3200)—Kaiser Wilhelm II was a notorious killjoy, but the era named after him saw a giddy efflorescence of artistic, theatrical, and literary innovation, admirably surveyed in "Berlin Metropolis: Jews and the New Culture, 1880-1914." German Jews, excluded from government, the military, and the universities, played a major role in these developments, from the Berlin Secession of 1899 to the beginning of the film industry. There's a lot here (more than two hundred and fifty objects are on display, from paintings, posters, and film clips to vitrines full of memorabilia), but curator Emily D. Bilski has kept urban sprawl in check by focussing on the lives of a few prominent individuals such as Max Liebermann, Herwalth Walden, and Ernst Lubitsch. There are a few odd gaps (only one painting by the young Max Beckmann?), but this is a festive, cogent show. Through April 23. . . . ¶ "John Singer Sargent: Portraits of the Wertheimer Family." Through Feb. 6. (Open Sundays through Thursdays, 11 to 5:45, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Milton Avery (1885-1965)—"Edge of Abstraction" focusses on the painter's late, beautifully spare landscapes of the fifties and sixties. Light rippling across water, shadows stretching across level sand, the wriggling shapes of dunes: from these simple motifs Avery made calm, lyrical emblems, at once tender and elemental. For art historians, the question is: Are these images the natural outgrowth of Avery's own aesthetic or are they responses to younger painters like Rothko, on whom (to complicate matters) Avery was a decisive influence? Through Jan. 29. (Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 794-0550.)

Leslie Bohnenkamp (1943-97)—In the early seventies, Bohnenkamp began making standing conical sculptures out of horsehair and jute. By the end of the decade, he had switched from fabric to paper, coiling strips of it into tapering forms that resemble shells or tusks. The examples here, all modestly sized, appear singly, in pairs, and in "herds" of as many as eighty pieces. At their best, the works have a wobbly delicacy that suggests a tantalizing range of affiliations, from entomology to biomorphic cartooning to the bony, minimalist sculptures of Martin Puryear. Sadly, just as Bohnenkamp was beginning to explore these possibilities, he was struck by a car while crossing a New York street. He never recovered fully, and his working career ended long before his death. Through Jan. 15. (Rickards, 1045 Madison Ave., at 79th St. 924-0858.)

Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968)—After making his notorious icons of aesthetic indifference—the urinal, the snow shovel, the defaced "Mona Lisa"—the hugely influential French expatriate didn't have many further ideas. He was aware, however, that adoring rich Americans like the Arensbergs were willing to pay for art objects, if he could produce some. What to do? With typical candor, Duchamp turned his own sterility into a wry gimmick, creating limited-edition facsimilies and variations of his own most famous pieces. More than a hundred of them are on view here, in a reliquary-style display intended for diehard Duchampions. Through Jan. 15. (Achim Moeller, 167 E. 73rd St. 988-4500.)

James Wyeth—New paintings from the art world's answer to George W. Along with distinguished bloodlines and summers in Maine, the young Wyeth shares the young Bush's lunkish vigor. When he exerts himself to make a bold statement, expect a pratfall. Several of the largest paintings here show mysterious girls in pigtails leading goats through storms—Wyeth's illustrator grandfather, N. C. Wyeth, would have blushed to sign them. More successful are smaller studies of gulls feeding on crabs and sea urchins. In these stark and painterly images the artist, like his political counterpart, doesn't try to disguise the fact that he's riding his father's coattails, and that he's having a good time doing it. Through Jan. 15. (Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 535-5767.)

Chen Yifei—Beautiful Shanghai bar girls loll around in these latest paintings by a prominent Chinese artist and film director. In his social-realist youth, Yifei's subject was patriotic soldiers with gleaming smiles and bayonets. Now it's glinting silks and wan, "Buy me a drink, soldier?" smiles. As an expression of Chinese attitudes toward the West, Yifei's mildly decadent confections have some interest. Otherwise, though, their low lighting and bland virtuosity seem calculated to induce narcolepsy. Through Jan. 15. (Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. 541-4900. Open Mondays.)

"Still Life Is Still Alive"—A silly title for a memorable show. At its heart are ten Picassos, ranging from a demure 1909 study of peaches to a bouquet of floral fireworks painted just a few years before the artist's death, in 1973. Supplementing these are equally high-calibre works by Beckmann, Braque, Giacommeti, and a dozen others. The juxtapositions feel delightfully competitive, like a series of contests in which great modernists square off, one by one, against the big guy. As expected, Picasso wins a majority of the bouts, but it's a pleasure to see him at least once facing the mild-mannered Morandi and getting knocked clear out of the ring. Through Jan. 15. (Krugier, 41 E. 57th St. 755-7288.)

Short List—**CARROLL BECKWITH,** Berry-Hill, 11 E. 70th St. 744-2300. Through Jan. 15. . . . **LAWRENCE GIPE,** Helman, 20 W. 57th St. 245-2888. Through Jan. 22. . . . **MORRIS GRAVES,** Schmidt Bingham, 41 E. 57th St. 888-1122. Through Feb. 12. . . . **CILDO MEIRELES,** Galerie Lelong, 20 W. 57th St. 315-0470. Through Jan. 15. . . . **RICHARD SERRA,** Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. 744-2313. Through Jan. 14. (See also Galleries—Chelsea.) . . . **DOROTHEA TANNING,** Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 752-1223. Through Jan. 22.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Anne Chu—A beautiful, crowded show of sculptures and watercolors inspired by classical Chinese sources, including T'ang-dynasty ceramics and scholar's rocks. Chu moves between mediums, shifting from urethane to bronze to ceramic with impressive ease. But it's the immediacy and energy of the painted, rough-hewn wood that prove the most engaging and also best display her skills as a colorist. The show's centerpiece, "View of Gorge," is a pair of mountains—one a sunny yellow, the other the pink of dawn—that transform the gallery into a room with a view. Through Jan. 15. (AC Project Room, 453 W. 17 St. 645-4970.)

Matthew McCaslin—In this kaleidoscopic show inspired by the sights at Coney Island and other amusement parks, televisions are attached to metal rods and fanned out like so many cars on a carnival ride; fireworks, electric lights, and computer-manipulated psychedelic imagery can be seen on the monitors. The clanging, whirring soundtracks heighten the giddy spectacle. McCaslin's best show in years. Through Jan. 15. (Feigen, 535 W. 20th St. 929-0500.)

John Miller—Miller channels the mindless spectacle of game shows in this garish musing on intellectual and spiritual bankruptcy. In one gallery, computer-generated paintings of props from "The Price Is Right" are accompanied by a haphazard arrangement of pedestals of varying sizes covered in red carpet. The intended interpretation may be Stonehenge for couch potatoes, but it falls flat. More successful are the rotating spheres of plastic flowers, floating in space. Through Jan. 22. (Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 206-7100.)

Thomas Scheibitz—Switch-hitting between architectonic abstraction and landscape, this up-and-coming young German artist paints with sure-handed clarity, and a palette of bright, yogurty colors. As in his last show, the abstractions are effortlessly handsome: imagine Sol LeWitt's wall decorations painted with the brisk nonchalance of Raoul Dufy. The landscapes, however, with their picket fences, huge spiky flowers, and picturesque mountain chalets, suggest a more puzzling and compelling use of Scheibitz's talents. An artist to watch. Through Jan. 15. (Bonakdar Jancou, 521 W. 21st St. 414-4144.)

Richard Serra—The man of steel is back and better than ever, inaugurating the latest (and most gargantuan) outpost of the Gagosian empire. Six curving monoliths, each fifty-two feet long and thirteen and a half feet high, are installed in a triangular configuration. A series of narrow passages converge in a central space that recalls either a Zendo or lockdown, depending on your mood. The planar shifts of the soaring, rusted slabs make you feel that you're both within and outside of the sculpture. A rare opportunity to use the words "graceful" and "two-ton" in the same sentence. Through Feb. 26. (Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 741-1111. See also Uptown Short List.)

"1999 Drawings"—A superb selection of drawings, all made over the past year. There's no real organizing principle, though much of the upstairs gallery is devoted to studies for projects, including a zany set of plans by Mark Dion and Nils Norman to convert an Israeli dump into a tourist trap. The downstairs selections are dreamier, with Ellen Birkenblit's winsome sketches of sloe-eyed women and Liz Larner's delicate abstractions, one of which sweetly resembles a minimalist daisy chain. Don't miss the hidden treasure in the guest book: Janine Antoni's exhaustive account of everything she touched in a day. Through Jan. 22. (Alexander and Bonin, 132 Tenth Ave., at 18th St. 367-7474.)

"Science Fictions"—Our vision of outer space is equal parts "Star Trek" and the Science Times section, or so this engaging show would have it. Some of the works, such as Claire Jervert's photographs of "flying saucers" and Christopher Johnson's deadpan landscapes with U.F.O.s, conjure up searches for new civilizations. Fact and fiction are best blurred by Yorgo Alexopoulos, who uses astronomical software to create Cibachrome photographs of the solar system, including the hotly disputed "tenth planet," Niburu. Through Feb. 6. (White Columns, 320 W. 13 St., entrance on Horatio St. 924-4212.)

Short List—**CHRISTOPH DRAEGER,** Liebman Magnan, 552 W. 24th St. 255-3225. Through Jan. 22. . . . **DAN FLAVIN,** Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 255-1105. Through Jan. 29. . . . **EWAN GIBBS,** Morris, 465 W. 23rd St. 727-2752. Through Jan. 22. . . . **POURAN JINCHI,** Nikolai, 505 W. 22nd St. 414-8511. Through Jan. 29. . . . **KELLIE O'BOSKY,** Fredericks, 504 W. 22nd St. 633-6555. Through Jan. 29.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Reverend Ethan Acres—This Vegas-based preacher-slash-artist wants to "put the fun back in fundamentalism," trading in his pulpit for a room of sculptures, whose subjects range from plagues of frogs and locusts to a star made of matchsticks. The soft-sculpture insects, swarming across the wall with heads of soldiers and missiles for tails, are an apocalyptic Muppet show. Through Jan. 22. (Keenan, 3 Crosby St. 431-5083.)

Robert Breer—The artist is well known in experimental film circles for his abstract animations, but until now his paintings, made in Paris in the fifties, have never been seen here. A cross between Stuart Davis and color-field abstraction, they're appealing but

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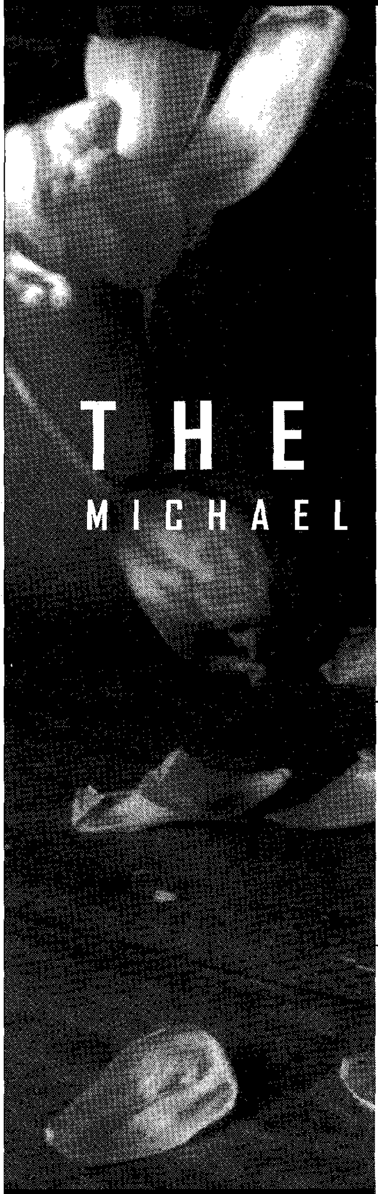

What to read next
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benign. The scene-stealers are a group of motorized "float" sculptures, which creep along the floor at a barely perceptible pace. They're delightful "animations" of form, from a pair of gray plastic convex disks to a red Styrofoam polygon. Also on view are three short films from the sixties and seventies. Through Jan. 29. (Staff USA Gallery, 495 Broadway. 925-9700.)

Eyal Danieli—"In Memory of the Revolution," works on paper by an Israeli-American artist who is interested in the connections between photography, modernism, and politics. Drawn with a smoky, crumbly touch that proclaims Danieli's loyalty to Seurat, most of these odd, nearly abstract images are based on black-and-white photographs. Their subjects are familiar, if seldom recognizable: Kafka appears, standing on a Prague street corner; so do Georges Braque, Jules Roche, and a shadow that may have been cast by Rodchenko. An intriguing, low-key debut. Through Jan. 22. (Lust, 61 Sullivan St. 965-0348.)

Martin Kippenberger (1954-97)—The late German artist was the Big Bad Wolf of the art world, bringing down the house with his raucous installations, paintings, sculptures, you name it. This lively show attests to his protean output and includes selections from the "Hotel Drawings" series, begun in the eighties and created on stationery in hostelries from Zagreb to Los Angeles. Also on view are several madcap collages, one of which incorporates a print by Sigmar Polke and an origami pig. Through Jan. 29. (Nolan-Eckman, 560 Broadway. 925-6190.)

Julião Sarmento—A film installation by a Portuguese artist whose evocative paintings lurk in the shadows of voyeurism and sexual obsession, fixing on details of the female body. In the front gallery, a super-8 color film trails a woman, seen from the waist down, in a tight black skirt and stiletto heels, winding her way through narrow cobblestone streets. In the rear gallery, the same footage is screened backward, this time in black-and-white. The goal is enigmatic eroticism, but the result feels gratuitous. Through Jan. 22. (Sean Kelly, 43 Mercer St. 343-2405.)

Short List—**CHARLES ARNOLDI,** Cowles, 74 Grand St. 925-3500. Through Jan. 29. . . . **MICHAEL CRAIG-MARTIN,** Blum, 99 Wooster St. 343-0441. Through Jan. 29. . . . **ELISE ENGLER,** Bodell, 13 E. 7th St. 477-1820. Through Jan. 16. . . . **MARINA ROSENFELD,** Marcus, 578 Broadway. 226-3200. Through Jan. 22.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Frantisek Vobecky (1902-91)—Surrealist-influenced photomontages from the thirties, by this Czech avant-gardist. Through Feb. 26. (Ubu, 16 E. 78th St. 794-4444.)

"Ancient History: Photographs of the Ancient World, 1851-1996"—Images of monuments, ruins, pictographs, and more, by such artists as Linda Connor, Lynn Davis, Louis de Clercq, Laura Gilpin, Richard Misrach, Andrew Moore, Felix Teynard, and Tseng Kwong Chi. Through Jan. 15. (Richardson, 560 Broadway. 343-1255.)

"Earth from Above"—A delightful series of large color photographs by the French aerial photographer Yann Arthus-Bertrand, taken while flying over more than sixty countries. Through Jan. 29. (Science, Industry, and Business Library, New York Public Library, Madison Ave. at 34th St. 869-8089.)

"YNOT"—Photographs from the latest issue of *Blind Spot,* including works by William Wegman, John Baldessari, Shannon Taggart, Scott Irvine, and James Whitlow Delano. Through Jan. 29. (Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave., at 25th St. 989-7600.)

Group Show—Recent works by Marianne Courville, Meghan Gerety, and Alexandra Rowley. Through Jan. 15. (Grimm, 505 W. 28th St. 564-7662. Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 7.)

Group Show—Works by, among others, Richard Billingham, Charles Hagen, Rudy Burckhardt, Laura Aguillar, and Petah Coyne. Through Jan. 22. (Lennon, Weinberg, 560 Broadway. 941-0012.)

International Center of Photography—"Propaganda and Dreams: Photographing the 1930s in the USSR and the US." Through Feb. 13. (1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

Short List—**JAYNE HINDS BIDAUT** and **LARRY GIANETTINO,** Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819. Both shows through Jan. 15. . . . **SARAH CHARLESWORTH,** Gorney, Bravin, and Lee, 534 W. 26th St. 352-8372. Through Feb. 5. . . . **ELAINE LUSTIG COHEN** and **DIDIER MASSARD,** Saul, 560 Broadway. 431-0747. Both shows through Jan. 15. . . . **JOHN COPLANS,** Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 627-6000. Through Jan. 15. . . . **ROLAND FISCHER,** Von Lintel & Nusser, 555 W. 25th St. 242-0599. Through Jan. 29. . . . **EDWARD GRAZDA,** Sepia, 148 W. 24th St. 645-9444. Through Jan. 29. . . . **JANE GREER,** O'Hara, 41 E. 57th St. 355-3330. Through Jan. 15. . . . **ANDREAS GURSKY,** Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 243-0200. Through Jan. 15. . . . **HIRO,** Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999. Through Jan. 15. . . . **PETER MILLER** and **CATHERINE LEUTHOLD,** Leica, 670 Broadway. 777-3051. Opens Saturdays at noon; both shows through Jan. 15. . . . **RUTH ORKIN,** Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010. Through Jan. 22. . . . **RENÉ-JACQUES,** Gallery 292, at 120 Wooster St. 431-0292. Through Jan. 22. . . . **ANDREA ROBBINS AND MAX BECHER,** Tonkonow, 601 W. 26th St. 255-8450.

CLASSICAL NOTES: A VINTAGE YEAR

The classical recording industry may be passing through a watershed moment. As the decade ended, new recording technologies, Internet distribution possibilities, and retrenchment within the high-profile Polygram group (particularly at the once sacrosanct Deutsche Grammophon label) armed the Cassandras with potent ammunition. Nonetheless, the doomsayers may have got ahead of themselves. The stacks of new releases are still tall and rich with extraordinary performances. Among the year's best:

TONY MILLIONAIRE

CHOPIN'S PIANO CONCERTOS had a banner year, befitting the composer's sesquicentennial. Martha Argerich plays them with dazzling energy (on EMI Classics), backed by Charles Dutoit and the gleaming Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal, while the composer's compatriot Krystian Zimerman (serving as both soloist and conductor, on Deutsche Grammophon) leads his hand-picked Polish Festival Orchestra in darkly dramatic interpretations, shaping the orchestra's phrases with a strikingly expressive rubato usually confined to solo passages.

Other master pianists also lived up to expectations. Murray Perahia's disk of selections from **MENDELSSOHN'S "SONGS WITHOUT WORDS"** (coupled with Bach-Busoni and Schubert-Liszt transcriptions, on Sony Classical) are elegant. Richard Goode's survey of **MOZART'S PIANO CONCERTOS,** with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra (on Nonesuch) hits a high point with the Concertos in A Major (K. 488) and C Minor—intense performances of profound pieces. András Schiff and Peter Serkin are riveting, if temperamentally distinct, in piano duets by Mozart and Reger, as well as in **BUSONI'S "FANTASIA CONTRAPPUNTISTICA"** (on ECM New Series; two disks). And **STEPHEN HOUGH'S NEW PIANO ALBUM** (Hyperion) proclaims this idiosyncratic artist's brilliance at enlivening long-forgotten salon morsels by the likes of Moszkowski and Chaminade, as well as at creating clever virtuoso transcriptions of Richard Rodgers evergreens. Nobody would consider Charles Ives to have been a great pianist, but **IVES PLAYS IVES,** a whole disk of him banging about the keyboard, in four sessions between 1933 and 1943, adds up to a bizarre but mesmerizing sound document of the great individualist (CRI).

For no particular reason, the English polyphonist William Byrd was unusually well served in 1999. The Cardinall's Musick, the spectacularly polished choir directed by Andrew Carwood, released the third and fourth volumes (on ASV Gaudeamus) of **THE BYRD EDITION,** its indispensable traversal of his choral music, devoted to Latin liturgical works and the pungent "Cantiones Sacrae" of 1575. Davitt Moroney's box of **BYRD'S COMPLETE KEYBOARD MUSIC** (Hyperion; seven disks) is a labor of love; long immersion in these challenging works allows him to render them with idiomatic fluency on a variety of harpsichords, clavichords, virginals, and organs.

To Moroney we also owe the first recording of music by Marc Roger Normand Couperin (Hyperion), the **LIVRE DE TABLATURE DE CLAVESCIN** created in the late seventeenth century by this obscure member of the famous French musical dynasty. It's a must for Francophiles, as is **REQUIEM DES ROIS DE FRANCE,** a haunting re-creation, by the ensemble Doulce Mémoire (Astrée Audivis), of the funerary rites for departing kings of the ancien régime.

Baritone Matthias Goerne's disk of **SCHUMANN'S "LIEDERKREIS" (OP. 39) AND "KERNER-LIEDER"** (Decca) is as good as lieder singing gets: his sumptuous voice supports stylistically respectful, but original, interpretations. A similar sense of wonder infuses the Quatuor Festetics's set of **HAYDN'S SIX STRING QUARTETS (OP. 9)** (Arcana; two disks), groundbreaking works in music history, offered with state-of-the-art period-instrument playing. Bach lovers enter the year with a probing new version of the **SAINT MATTHEW PASSION,** thanks to the insightful stewardship of conductor Philippe Herreweghe (Harmonia Mundi; three disks), and aficionados of symphonic music can thank Esa-Pekka Salonen and the Los Angeles Philharmonic for a disk of vibrant pieces, mostly from the nineteen-thirties, by the underappreciated Mexican modernist **SILVESTRE REVUELTAS** (Sony Classical).

Which brings us to two indispensable opera recordings. Everyone knows **KURT WEILL'S "THE THREEPENNY OPERA"**; but along comes a new scholarly edition (departing noticeably from popular versions) that is given a revelatory performance by the composer and *Kabarettist* HK Gruber, leading Frankfurt's Ensemble Modern (on BMG Classics; two disks). **CARL NIELSEN'S "MASKARADE"** (Decca; two disks) is a distinctly flavored comic gem from the first decade of the twentieth century—equal parts "Meistersinger," "Falstaff," and "Fledermaus," one might say—but it goes unheard except in Denmark. The starry cast includes Aage Haugland, Gert-Henning Jensen, and Bo Skovhus.

Through Jan. 29. . . . **LOUIS STETTNER,** Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766. Through Jan. 15. . . . **DENNIS STOCK,** Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway. 966-6223. Through Jan. 22. . . . **MANABU YAMANAKA,** Stux, 529 W. 20th St. 352-1600. Through Jan. 22.

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA—John Harbison's **THE GREAT GATSBY,** with Dawn Upshaw, Susan Graham, Lorraine Hunt Lieberson, Jerry Hadley, Mark Baker, Dwayne Croft, and Richard Paul Fink; conducted by James Levine. (Jan. 12 and Jan. 15 at 8.) . . . **LA TRAVIATA,** with Cristina Gallardo-Domas, Roberto Aronica, and Vladimir Chernov; Roberto Abbado. (Jan. 13 and Jan. 17 at 8.) . . . **MADAMA BUTTERFLY,** with Sylvie Valayre, Jane Bunnell, Vladimir Galouzine, and William Shimell; Marcello Viotti. (Jan. 14 at 8 and Jan. 18 at 7:30.) . . . **RIGOLETTO,** with Sumi Jo, Marcelo Alvarez, and Leo Nucci; Vladimir Jurowski. (Jan. 15 at 1:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

"MOZART AND SALIERI"—Audiences drawn to Peter Shaffer's "Amadeus," currently holding sway on Broadway, may wish to check out an earlier realization of the tale. In this concert performance, Vincent La Selva conducts the New York Grand Opera in Rimsky-Korsakov's operatic setting (after Pushkin's verse drama), using the composer's own chamber orchestration. Tenor Enrico di Giuseppe appears as Mozart and baritone Richard Holmes as Salieri. Arias by both composers, plus a discussion of eighteenth-century vocal style, round out the evening, since Rimsky-Korsakov's "dialogue drama" (as he called it) lasts only an hour. (Weill Recital Hall. Jan. 13 at 7:30.)

"DIE LIEBE DER DANAE"—Strauss's late opera, completed in 1940 but not premièred until twelve years later, in a concert version, with Leon Botstein leading the American Symphony Orchestra and soprano Lauren Flanigan in the title role. (Avery Fisher Hall. Jan. 16 at 3.)

"A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM"—Britten's 1960 opera, in a semi-staged version featuring advanced students of the Juilliard School. (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. Jan. 18 and Jan. 20 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC—At Avery Fisher Hall, Kurt Masur conducting. Violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter performs her final orchestral programs in a two-week residency that also includes a Jan. 17 recital at Carnegie Hall. Jan. 12 at 8: A suite from Prokofiev's "Romeo and Juliet," in addition to the violin concertos of Berg and Sibelius. . . . ¶ Jan. 14-15 at 8: Ms. Mutter is featured in Wolfgang Rihm's "Gesungene Zeit" ("Time Chant") and Penderecki's Violin Concerto No. 2 ("Metamorphosen"), in a concert that also includes Ravel's "La Valse" and Strauss's "Till Eulenspiegel." (875-5030.)

CHOIR OF ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA—Kent Tritle directs the choir and the Ars Antiqua period-instrument ensemble in motets and cantatas by three seventeenth-century Bachs (Johann Michael, Georg Christoph, and Johann Christoph), works that their descendant Johann Sebastian proudly preserved in his family archive. (Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, Park Ave. at 84th St. 288-2520. Jan. 13 at 8. . . . ¶ **NOTE:** In a pre-concert recital, beginning at 6:45 and open to ticket holders, Nancianne Parrella plays organ works by two of the above—Johann Christoph and Johann Michael—and two other musical Bachs: Johann Bernhard, who was Johann Sebastian's cousin and contemporary, and Heinrich, who, having been born in 1615, stands as one of the ancestral heads of music's preëminent dynasty.)

CARNEGIE HALL CHORAL WORKSHOP—Since Jan. 10, James Conlon has been overseeing a Carnegie Hall "professional training institute" for choral conductors and professional choristers. The event culminates with a performance of Zemlinsky's Psalms No. 23 and No. 13, as well as Mozart's Requiem (employing a new edition by Robert Levin); with soprano Dominique Labelle, mezzo-soprano Margaret Lattimore, tenor Stanford Olsen, bass-baritone Nathan Berg, the seminar's choristers, and the Orchestra of St. Luke's. (Carnegie Hall. Jan. 14 at 8.)

NEW YORK COLLEGIUM VOCAL ENSEMBLE—Jos van Veldhoven, the director of the Netherlands Bach Society, concludes an early-music choral workshop by leading works by Schein, Schütz, and Bach. (Church of St. Vincent Ferrer, 869 Lexington Ave., at 66th St. Jan. 14 at 8. For information about tickets, call 717-9246.)

IL GIARDINO ARMONICO—Mezzo-soprano Cecilia Bartoli joins this period-instrument group, for a program of opera arias and concertos by Vivaldi (essentially a live version of the participants' recent Decca recording of the same repertoire, in which Ms. Bartoli is so mannered that she sounds like a parody of herself). (Alice Tully Hall. Jan. 15 at 8.)

JUPITER SYMPHONY—Jens Nygaard, always on the lookout for unusual additions to the orchestral repertoire, conducts François-Joseph Gossec's "Gavotte and Tambourine" (a whilom popular standard) and the Concertino for Oboe by the nineteenth-century Bohemian composer Johann Wenzel Kalliwoda (whose music was esteemed by Schumann, among others), in addition to three of Mahler's "Rückert Lieder" and Saint-Saëns's Organ Symphony. Oboist Gerard Reuter, baritone John Kramar, and organist Gregory D'Agostino take turns as soloists. (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. Jan. 17 at 2 and 7 and Jan. 18 at 8. For information about tickets, call 799-1259.)

GOTHAM CITY BAROQUE ORCHESTRA—A period-instrument ensemble, performing concertos by Corelli and Vivaldi. (Casa Italiana, Columbia University, Amsterdam Ave. at 117th St. Jan. 18 at 6. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 854-7799.)

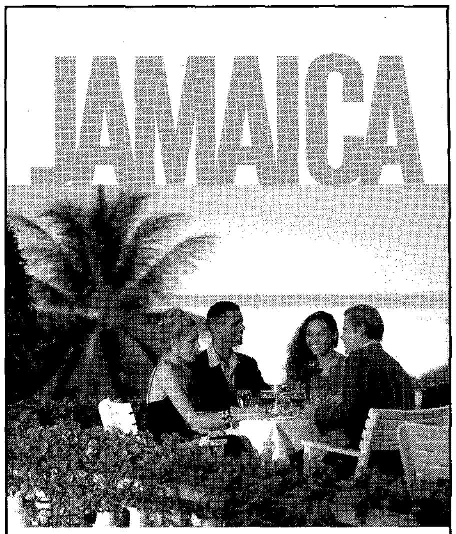
RECITALS

LUCA PIANCA—The lutenist, a co-director of the instrumental ensemble Il Giardino Armonico, performs Bach's Suite in G Minor (BWV 995), in addition to works by Frescobaldi, Silvius Leopold Weiss, and others. (Weill Recital Hall. Jan 12 at 8.)

MARKA YOUNG—The violinist, a period-instrument specialist, plays Heinrich Biber's Passacaglia for Unaccompanied Violin. Fortepianist Gwedolyn Toth assists her in works by Beethoven, Schubert, and others. (St. Francis of Assisi Church, 135 W. 31st St. Jan. 13 at 1:15. No tickets necessary.)

MENDELSSOHN STRING QUARTET—This distinguished ensemble begins the millennium with a new first violinist—Miriam Fried, replacing Nick Eanet, who recently signed on as co-concertmaster at the Metropolitan Opera—but the group won't be going public with its core repertoire until next season. Each of the pieces in this concert is a quintet, with distinguished colleagues taking some of the pressure off the foursome: Charles Neidich in Mozart's Clarinet Quintet, Robert Mann (playing viola) in Brahms's G-Major String Quintet, and José Caballero in Boccherini's D-Major Guitar Quintet. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Jan. 13 at 7.)

BARGEMUSIC—New York's floating concert hall offers a week of Beethoven, performed by violinist Philippe Graffin, violist Toby Hoffman, cellist Gary Hoffman, and pianist Jeremy Menuhin. Jan. 13 at 7:30 and Jan. 16 at 2: The "Variations on a Theme by Handel," the D-Major Piano Trio (the "Ghost"), and the Piano Quartet in E-Flat Major (Op. 16). . . . ¶ Jan. 14-15 at 7:30: Three works composed between 1810 and 1816: the song cycle "An die Ferne Geliebte" (Op. 98, which, in a brave display of unorthodoxy, is here performed in a purely instrumental version, with solo viola taking the part of the singer), the G-Major



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Violin Sonata (Op. 96), and the "Archduke" Piano Trio (Op. 97). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061.)

Terry Riley—The composer takes his place at the keyboards to lead a chamber ensemble in several of his works. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Jan. 13 at 8.)

Bachmann-Klibonoff-Fridman Trio—The ensemble performs works for piano trio by Turina and Ravel, and is joined by colleagues for pieces by Ibert, Falla, and Piazzolla. (Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St. 685-0008, ext. 347. Jan. 14 at 7.)

Stefano Scodanibbio—A double-bassist, Mr. Scodanibbio frequently inspires important contemporary composers to write for his often underemployed instrument. Giacinto Scelsi, Luigi Nono, and Iannis Xenakis have all composed pieces for him, and he has been a regular concert colleague of Terry Riley (with whom he appears at Merkin Concert Hall this week). In this recital, he offers his own "Voyage That Never Ends," a forty-six-minute unaccompanied work, in addition to Cage's "Ryoanji." (James Cohan gallery, 41 W. 57th St. Jan. 14 at 7. The concert is free, but for reservations, which are recommended, call 755-7171.)

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center—This month, the Society is exploring the flux of musical styles that marked the period 1917-1945, as evinced by a wide variety of European and American music. Jan. 14 at 8: Violinist Daniel Phillips, pianists David Golub and André-Michel Schub, and percussionists Richard Fitz and Gordon Gottlieb perform a concert that includes Janáček's Violin Sonata, Bartók's Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion, Stravinsky's Duo Concertante for Violin and Piano, and Gershwin's "An American in Paris" (arranged for piano duet). . . . ¶ Jan. 16 at 5: The Takács String Quartet plays all six of Bartók's quartets—the last four fall into the period being scrutinized—in a marathon concert with two intermissions. . . . ¶ Jan. 18 at 7:30: German works of the period: Eisler's "Roman" and "Prison House" Cantatas (both with mezzo-soprano Theodora Hanslowe), Weill's Cello Sonata, Strauss's Sextet for Strings from "Capriccio," and Ervín Schulhoff's String Sextet. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050.)

Two Quartets—The Muir String Quartet (in a rare New York appearance) and the Chicago String Quartet (formed only four years ago) share performing duties for an evening of quartets by David Diamond, Lukas Foss, Ezra Laderman, and George Perle. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. Jan. 15 at 8.)

Scott St. John—The violinist and violist, assisted by pianist Reiko Aizawa, performs works by Brahms, Takemitsu, and Messiaen. (Washington Irving High School, Irving Pl. at 16th St. Jan. 15 at 8. For information about tickets, call 586-4680.)

Drew Minter—The countertenor performs medieval songs on the theme of leave-taking, accompanying himself on an early harp. (Nour Foundation, 322 W. 108th St. Jan. 15 at 8. For information about tickets, call 730-1316.)

Rubio String Quartet—The Belgian ensemble plays quartets by Haydn (in E-Flat Major, Op. 33, No. 2), Piet Swerts (his Second), and Shostakovich (his Second). (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Jan. 15 at 8.)

Harid String Quartet—The foursome, which swept four of the six top prizes in the most recent Bordeaux International String Quartet Competition, performs Schubert's Quartets in A Minor (the "Rosamunde") and D Minor ("Death and the Maiden"), as well as Bartók's Quartet No. 4. (Mannes College of Music, 150 W. 85th St. Jan. 16 at 1:30. No tickets necessary.)

Songs for a Sunday—The Marilyn Horne Foundation has assembled a starry procession of singers—including sopranos Renée Fleming and Deborah Voigt, Ms. Horne herself as the program's mezzo-soprano, countertenors David Daniels and Bejun Mehta, tenor Jerry Hadley, and baritone Bryn Terfel—for a free afternoon of art songs, as a gift to the city. The program includes the premières of songs by William Bolcom and Richard Hundley. (Carnegie Hall. Jan. 16 at 2. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 582-2000.)

Gail Archer—The organist's all-Bach recital includes the Partita on "O Gott, Du Frommer Gott" and the Concerto in C Major (BWV 594). (Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Central Park West at 65th St. Jan. 16 at 5. No tickets necessary.)

Anne-Sophie Mutter—The violinist concludes her two-week residency in New York by performing Arvo Pärt's "Fratres," Stravinsky's "Suite Italienne," Prokofiev's Violin Sonata No. 2, and Shoskakovich's E-Minor Piano Trio. Pianist Lambert Orkis and cellist Daniel Müller-Schott assist. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Jan. 17 at 7:30.)

Divertimento String Trio—This newly formed ensemble, comprising violinist Soovin Kim, violist Michael Tree (of the Guarneri Quartet), and cellist Margo Tatgenhorst, performs Beethoven's Trio in E-Flat Major (Op. 3) and Serenade in D Major (Op. 8). (Kosciuszko Foundation, 15 E. 65th St. Jan. 17 at 8. For information about tickets, call 279-4200.)

Parnassus—The modern-music group performs Elliott Carter's "Trilogy" and Marius Constant's "Trois Portraits," in addition to pieces by Davidovsky, Anthony Korf, Robert Martin, and Maurice Wright. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Jan. 18 at 8.)

Monomoy Music—A mainstay of Cape Cod summers for thirty years, this festival inaugurates a three-concert series in New York this season, with each installment including a piece by Dohnányi. The opening recital includes that composer's Piano Quintet No. 2, in addition to Mozart's Oboe Quartet and Dvořák's D-Minor Serenade for Winds. (Weill Recital Hall. Jan. 18 at 8.)

"Piano Century"—The Juilliard School's season-long survey of twentieth-century piano music continues as seven of the conservatory's students perform works from the nineteen-fifties, by Shostakovich, Isang Yun, William Schuman (his "Voyages"), Giacinto Scelsi, Morton Feldman (his "Las Pieces"), and Vincent Persichetti (his Tenth Piano Sonata). (Paul Hall, Juilliard School, Lincoln Center Plaza. Jan. 18 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

Electronic Music Festival—A six-day exploration of electronic music opens with performances by Morton Subotnick (whose "Silver Apples of the Moon" was an electronic classic of the sixties), Pauline Oliveros, Tony Conrad, and David Grubbs. (Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. 219-3055. Jan. 18 at 8.)

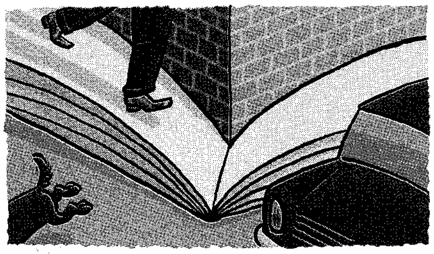
ABOVE AND BEYOND

Readings—Jan. 12 at 8: By Rick Moody and Susan Noel, from their poetry. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. Tickets at the door.) . . . ¶ Jan. 13 at 8: By Michael Cunningham, from his novel "The Hours," Jeffrey Renard Allen, from his novel, "Rails Under My Back," and Gregory Gibson, from his memoir, "Gone Boy." (National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park S. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Jan. 16 at 7: By Jonathan Letham and Carter Scholtz, from their recent fiction. (K.G.B., 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Jan. 17 at 8: Actor James Earl Jones celebrates Martin Luther King, Jr., Day with a reading of American slave narratives. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.)

Talks—Jan. 15 at 5: Conductor John McGlinn discusses Noël Coward's 1954 musical "After the Ball," which McGlinn performed last year in London and Chicago. (Great Hall, Cooper Union. Third Ave. at 7th St. For more information, call 642-0142.) . . . ¶ Jan. 18 at 6: Jazz scholar Loren Schoenberg presents a multimedia lecture on Louis Armstrong and New Orleans. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 570-3949.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Street Fair



CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

The street as something more than just a thoroughfare is the subject of several recent books that view it as everything from a battleground to an informal art gallery. Jane Jacobs, in her classic 1961 urban study, "The Death and Life of Great American Cities," celebrated "the intricacy of sidewalk use, bringing with it a constant succession of eyes." Elijah Anderson, in his investigation into the culture of violence among inner-city youths in Philadelphia, **Code of the Street** (Norton), takes a grimmer view of pavement life. The eyes in his book are those of Hammurabi's unforgiving code of justice. Anderson examines the street's "primitive form of social exchange that holds would-be perpetrators accountable by promising an 'eye for an eye,' or a certain 'payback' for transgressions." This study of urban victims and victors is rich with the voices of young people who are caught up in doing what it takes to survive—or at least to uphold one's "juice."

Grand Central Winter (Washington Square) is the New York memoir of Lee Stringer, a recovering addict who spent most of the eighties living in a narrow crawl space—"my hole"—underneath Grand Central Terminal. Stringer became a correspondent for *Street News*, for which he wrote of his first crack hit: "The taste of success, love, orgasm, omnipotence, immortality, and winning the lottery, all rolled into one. And then some."

In **The Street Is My Home** (Stanford), Patricia C. Márquez, a *sifrina* ("uptown girl") from Caracas, returns to seedier parts of her native city to get to know Venezuela's growing population of street kids. One *chupapega* ("glue sniffer"), when asked about his addiction, replies, "It makes me forget that I am hungry."

Barry Dawson's **Street Graphics India** (Thames & Hudson) is a photographic album of the subcontinent's astonishingly vibrant spectacle of outdoor advertising. For example, one movie poster in Bombay features—in both parody of and homage to Western culture—a ripple-chested Indian Sylvester Stallone emerging from smoke and flames, cradling a wounded blond boy.

Books.

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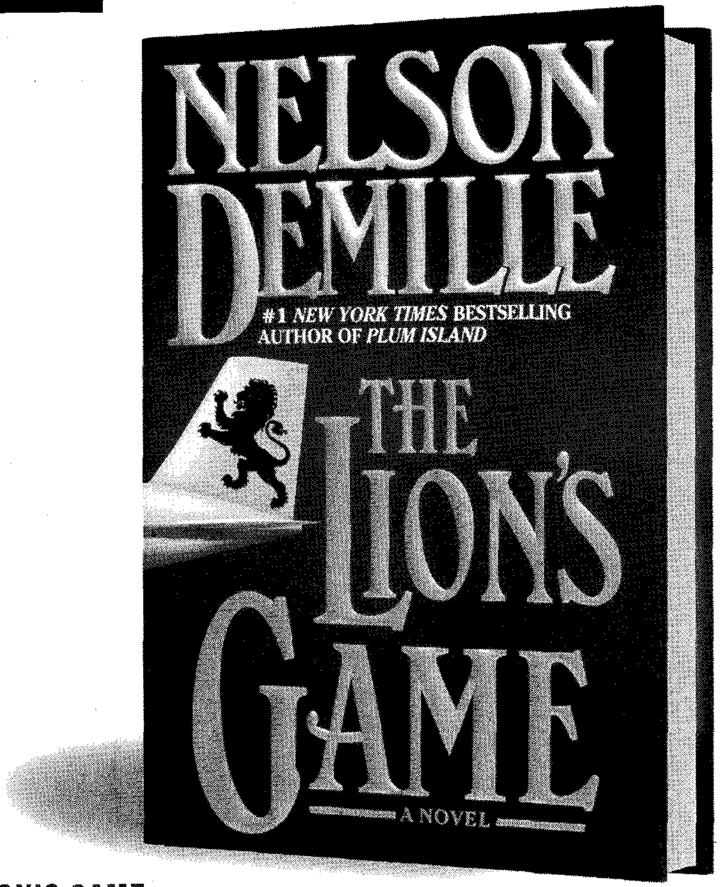
"He would like to return to Libya, but it was not important that he do so. To die in the land of the infidel on his Jihad was a triumph and an honor."
—Excerpt from *The Lion's Game*



THE LION'S GAME

by Nelson DeMille

Tension builds aboard a 747 en route from Paris as a Libyan terrorist, who has lost his family to American bombers, prepares to exact vengeance on everyone in his path. John Corey, the stalwart and sardonic hero of *Plum Island*, soon finds himself as the only barrier between life and death for America's innocent citizens. Bestselling author Nelson DeMille's storytelling powers are in peak form in this thriller about a seemingly unstoppable terror from above—a suspense tale laced with memorable characters, snappy dialogue and startling plot turns geared to leave you breathless. (Warner Books)

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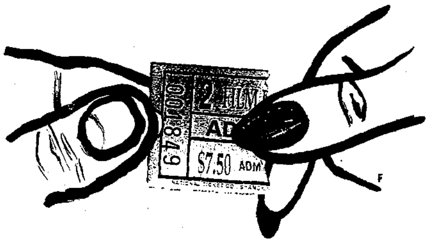


THE MOVIES

OPENING

The Life and Times of Hank Greenberg—A documentary about the 1930s Detroit Tigers slugger Hank Greenberg, a secular Jew from the Bronx who was known as "the baseball Moses." Directed by Aviva Kempner. Opening Jan. 12. (Film Forum.)

My Dog Skip—Willie Morris's memoir of a Southern boyhood during the Second World War is adapted by director Jay Russell. With Kevin Bacon and Diane Lane. Opening Jan. 12. (Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

Next Friday—Ice Cube returns as Craig, the homeboy from the comedy "Friday," but this time the action takes place in the suburbs. Steve Carr directs. Opening Jan. 12.

Play It to the Bone—Woody Harrelson and Antonio Banderas play washed-up middleweights who vie for a chance to fight a title bout. Directed by Ron Shelton. Opening Jan. 14.

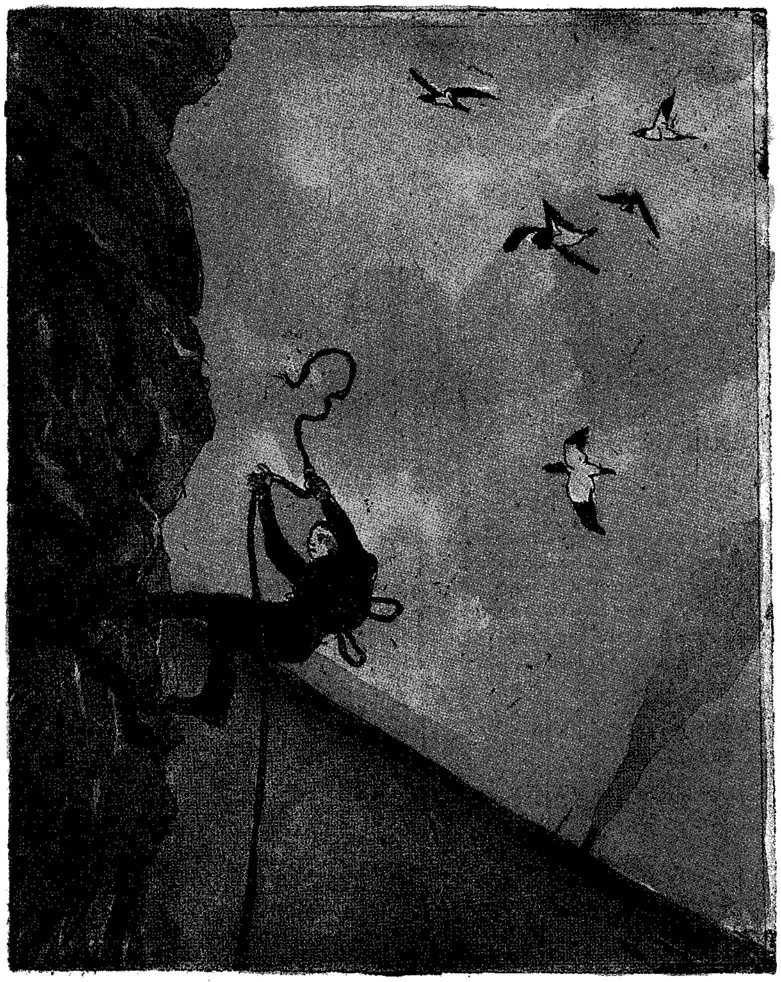
The Quarry—Marion Hansel directs this drama set in South Africa, about a fugitive (John Lynch) who kills a Baptist minister and then assumes his identity. Opening Jan. 14. (Quad Cinemas.)

Supernova—In the twenty-second century, a medical crew receives a distress signal from a mining operation in a distant galaxy. With Lou Diamond Phillips and James Spader. Directed by Thomas Lee. Opening Jan. 14. (Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, and Orpheum VII.)

FILM NOTES

(If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.)

Anna and the King—To remake "The King and I" without the music is a risky enterprise, like leaving the bosoms out of a Russ Meyer flick. But Andy Tennant has stuck gamely to a tough job and made a moody, respectable epic that would have been even better if he had shortened it by three-quarters of an hour. Jodie Foster, doing her scary-intelligence number, plays the widowed Anna; Chow-Yun Fat, forsaking the firepower of his action movies for a killer smile, plays King Mongkut, who doesn't want some smartass Westerner telling him how to run the country or why he shouldn't remove the heads of those delinquent citizens who fall in love. In fact, the moral and political issues feel cloudy and unresolved; what stays with you is the elegant comedy of a romance that never quite comes to pass.—*Anthony Lane* (12/27/99-1/3/00) (Chelsea Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 64th and 2nd, Village East Cinemas, and Ziegfeld.)



A cliff-climbing race is the centerpiece of Michael Powell's "The Edge of the World." Starting Jan. 14, a restored print will run at Film Forum.

ROBERT ANDREW PARKER

Any Given Sunday—In Oliver Stone's pro-football movie, everything happens at once: the ball is snapped, thighs churn, bodies lock together, and, as the coach screams, an arm is raised to throw the ball. Stone takes us so deep inside the action that we feel we're being threshed by the teeth of a machine. This is an overwrought, exhausting movie, but at least Stone's instincts as an entertainer have revived. The movie is ostensibly a protest against corporate control of sport but is itself a prime example of corporate art. With Al Pacino, haggard and magnificent, as the aging, traditionalist coach Tony D'Amato; Dennis Quaid as the star quarterback who, in his late thirties, is fading fast; Jamie Foxx as the young hot shot who wants to replace him, and who must be taught to play not just for himself but for the team; Cameron Diaz as the blond-bitch team owner; and football great Lawrence Taylor as a defensive genius who risks maiming himself.—*David Denby* (84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, and Village Theatre VII.)

Bad Timing/A Sensual Obsession (1980)—This "Todestanz in Vienna" is no "Last Tango in Paris." It's about the lust of a sylphlike, proper psychiatrist, played by Art Garfunkel, for an attractively chunky, free-spirited young woman, played by Theresa Russell. The director, Nicolas Roeg, and the screenwriter, Yale Udoff, have conceived of this film in capital letters: Russell stands for Instinct and Garfunkel for Intellect, and the movie is designed to prove that you can reach a literal dead end by following either exclusively. Roeg lavishes attention on Russell's breasts and rump and thighs, but the movie has none of the uncanny sexual feeling of his films "Walkabout" or "Don't Look Now." In the framing story, doctors fight to save Russell after a suicide attempt while a detective, played by Harvey Keitel, questions Garfunkel about the hours before her arrival at the hospital. Garfunkel acts so nervous that even Inspector Clouseau would grow suspicious.—*Michael Sragow* (Jan. 13; BAM Rose Cinemas.)

Cradle Will Rock—In 1937, Orson Welles and John Houseman barely succeeded in putting on Marc Blitzstein's "The Cradle Will Rock," a musical drama about prostitutes, unions, and a lot of other things that musicals were never meant to mention. Tim Robbins's picture tells the interlocking stories of that supercharged age. Houseman (Cary Elwes) and Welles (Angus Macfadyen) are merely part of the procession; we also get the saga of Nelson Rockefeller (John Cusack) paying Diego Rivera (Ruben Blades) to paint a giant mural and then having it destroyed. As if in homage to that lost work, Robbins moves gaily and with high technical fluency from penniless actors (John Turturro and Emily Watson) to sincere socialites like Countess La Grange (Vanessa Redgrave) and a ravishing Fascist named Margherita Sarfatti (Susan Sarandon). With Hank Azaria as Blitzstein, and—best of all—Cherry Jones as Hallie Flanagan, the smiling mainstay of the Federal Theatre in its darkest hour.—*A.L.* (12/13/99) (Angelika Film Center, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and State.)

The Emperor and the Assassin—Chen Kaige's ambitious historical epic is more diorama than drama. The film re-creates the rise to power of Ying Zheng, the warlord who in 221 B.C. united China and became its first emperor. Chen wants to show us the violent, decisive acts that shape history, and the plot eventually sets Zheng (Li Xuejian) against his childhood lover, Lady Zhao (Gong Li, who retains her beauty even after her character's face is branded), and Jing Ke (Zhang Fengyi), the reluctant assassin she sends to kill him. The film is parcelled into five acts, and moves at a serene, stately pace—a constant reminder that we are watching History. The dialogue is appropriately remote and epigrammatic. The film's saving graces are its heady, intense battle sequences and the high level of anthropological detail that informs every scene. In Mandarin.—*Michael Agger* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Fantasia 2000—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Lincoln Square.)

The Green Mile—Frank Darabont's adaptation of Stephen King's 1996 serial novel is a three-hour-and-eight-minute religious allegory about a black convict (Michael Clarke Duncan), a white prison guard (Tom Hanks), and a mouse. The convict is meant to be Jesus Christ, and the mouse, which gets crushed and then reborn, is meant to represent survival—or perhaps Life Itself. Darabont lays out his meagre death-row story with lethal thoroughness, and the miracles arrive on schedule. By the end, the sanctimonious hypocrisy is all but unbearable.—*D.D.* (12/20/99) (Astor Plaza, Chelsea West, Coronet Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

Holy Smoke—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Lincoln Square.)

The Hurricane—A very square inspirational movie, factually untrustworthy, about the black boxer Rubin (Hurricane) Carter, a contender for the middleweight crown, who was locked up in 1967 for murders that he did not commit, and who spent years in prison refashioning himself as a lean, ascetic thinker and militant—the icon of the African-American male unjustly incarcerated. As Carter, Denzel Washington offers his usual concentration, quickness, and stern, appraising gaze; he pulls back from obvious emphasis and lowers his voice when he's most earnest and deadly. Washington is great, but the movie is a crock, a liberal fairy tale about a black American teen-ager (Vicellous Reon Shannon) and three white Canadian do-gooders (Liev Schreiber, John Hannah, and Deborah Kara Unger) who perform the investigative work that leads to Carter's release. The movie slights the work of lawyers who worked for Carter without fees for years, and neglects to tell us that Carter had been imprisoned once for three muggings before his arrest for the murders. Directed, clunkily, by Norman Jewison; written by Armyan Bernstein and Dan Gordon.—*D.D.* (Beekman and 84th Street Sixplex.)

Magnolia—In Paul Thomas Anderson's new movie, the characters break down, fall apart, and denounce themselves and others. "Magnolia" consists of multiple vignettes set in the San Fernando Valley, but since there's no common theme, the picture becomes a kind of mad crackup derby. Much of the material is earnest Arthur Miller-type stuff about how we can't escape the past, we can't escape the evil we've done, we all need to be truthful with one another, and so on. The ideas are banal, but Anderson ("Boogie Nights") plays each sequence in real time and cuts among them with remarkable fluency, and the actors have some tremendous arialike moments—especially Julianne Moore as an adulterous young wife, John C. Reilly as an angelic cop looking for love, and Tom Cruise as some sort of sex guru who hosts a cable-TV show called "Seduce and Destroy." With Jason Robards, Philip Seymour Hoffman, and William H. Macy.—*D.D.* (12/20/99) (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema I, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

Man on the Moon—Jim Carrey, as the surrealist comic Andy Kaufman, who died in 1984, is more volatile than the actual Kaufman—bigger, more threatening, more thoroughly lost in madness. He captures Kaufman's infantile grandiosity, the taunting ironic schmuckiness that dared anyone to take offense. Unfortunately, the moviemakers' intention is not to illuminate Kaufman but to enshrine him as a pure performer and beautiful nut case. This Kaufman is exactly the same offstage and on. He's all surface and tricks, all wild-monkey craziness, and he shatters every reality but his own. We are too intimidated to ask such obvious questions as, Is he calculating and shrewd or is he just unconscious—a semi-psychotic set loose in the media? Our desire to understand him is recast as some sort of existential weakness; the movie turns into an exercise in one-upmanship. With Paul Giamatti, Danny DeVito, and Courtney Love. Written by Scott Alexander and Larry Karaszewski.—*D.D.* (12/27/99-1/3/00) (42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Olympia I and II, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Village Theatre VII.)

Snow Falling on Cedars—Set in the Pacific Northwest in 1950, Scott Hicks's movie (his first since "Shine") confronts all the big issues: love, death, memory, war, forgiveness, racial hatred, and the irresistible urge welling from the heart of primitive man—to flick an entire bagful of M&M's at a movie screen. The story turns on the demise of a local fisherman, who died of either family vengeance or, more likely, boredom. His friend Kazuo (Rick Yune), a respected member of the local Japanese-American community, is accused of murder. Ethan Hawke stars as a young reporter covering the case; the attorneys are played by James Rebhorn and Max Von Sydow, who steals the picture as a way of passing the time. Given the additional presence of James Cromwell and Sam Shepard, it should have been impossible for the director to screw up; somehow, Hicks pulls it off. The film is so entombed in gloom and crummy weather, so rich in meaningless detail, that by the end you don't particularly care who whacked the poor victim, let alone why; on the other hand, under the weight of all that snow, you get a pretty good idea of what it feels like to be a cedar.—*A.L.* (Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

The Talented Mr. Ripley—For his first outing since "The English Patient," the writer and director Anthony Minghella has returned to the roasted light of Italy; this is a less passionate project—or, rather, the passions are directed toward less salubrious ends. The source is Patricia Highsmith's spooky, misanthropic novel of 1955; Matt Damon plays Tom Ripley, her murderous hero, although he probably lacks the quicksilver elusiveness that the role demands. He is outshone by Jude Law, whose violent disappearance, halfway through the picture, is a grievous wound. Law is sunny, slippery, and pansexual; he might have made a better Ripley himself. In the female roles, Gwyneth Paltrow struggles to find anything much in the stony Marge, whom Highsmith so loftily scorned; more rewarding is the dreamy Cate Blanchett as an heiress named Meredith Logue—a part invented by Minghella. Her fine features are like a flawless period detail in themselves. The film feels warm but unsettled, as if hinting at approaching storms; the score, too, flits from lugubrious to manic. With Philip Seymour Hoffman, perfectly cast once again, this time as another of Tom's victims.—*A.L.* (12/27/99-1/3/00) (East 85th Street, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Olympia I and II, 72nd Street East, and Village Theatre VII.)

Titus—Shakespeare's first, and most violent, tragedy, "Titus Andronicus," lacks the wit that leavens the gore of his later works. The play concerns a double-revenge plot set in motion when the Roman general Titus sacrifices the eldest son of Tamora, Queen of the Goths. Julie Taymor, making her film directorial début, softens the edges by mixing modern and ancient elements, interrupting the action with surreal allegorical montages, and introducing a new character, Young Lucius (Osheen Jones), a twentieth-century boy who is meant to be a stand-in for the audience, but mostly looks out of place. Before Titus (Anthony Hopkins) gets around to serving his famous sons-of-the-queen-filled pie, Taymor has shown us ritual sacrifice, rape, murder, torture, and several dismemberments. It's all very beautiful. Anthony Hopkins alone appears comfortable with Elizabethan English; Jessica Lange has a wonderful, focussed presence as Queen Tamora; and Alan Cumming's smirk is perfect for his role as the effeminate boy emperor, Saturninus. But in her desire to make "Titus" relevant, Taymor presents the play's symbolism with all the subtlety of a knife to the gut—and after you've endured the film's countless stylized thrusts, the only sane

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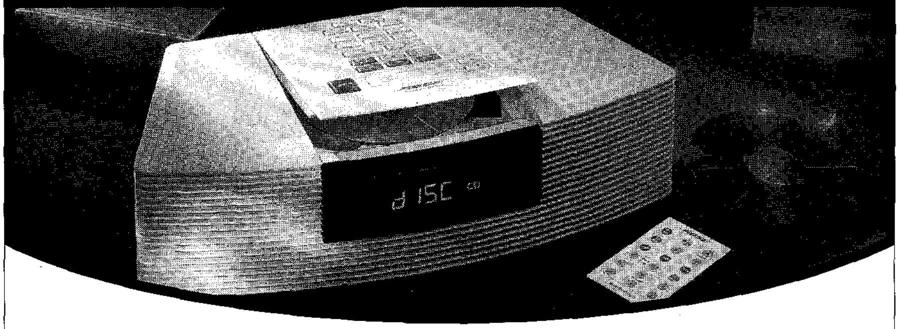

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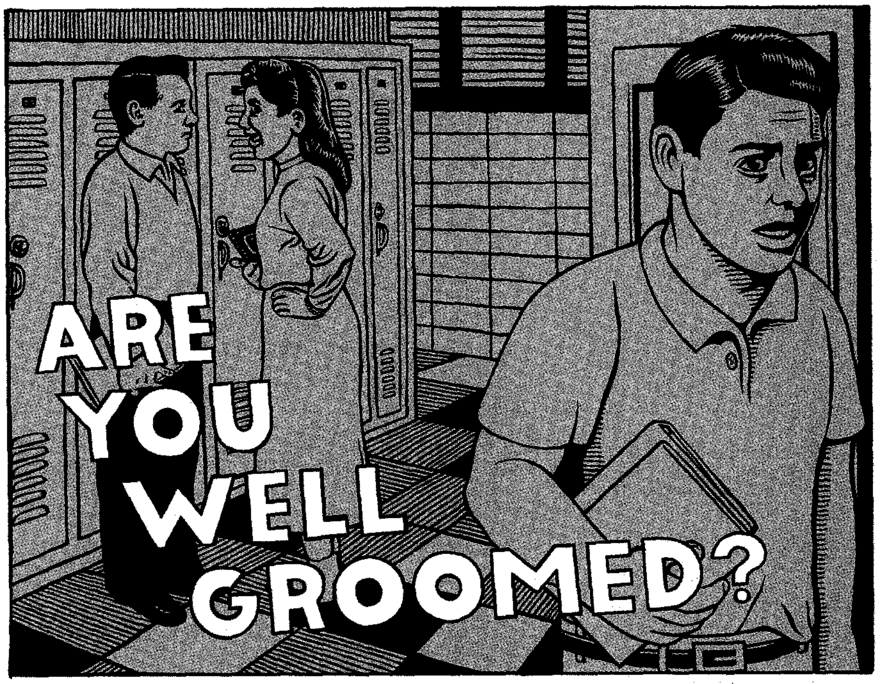
response is laughter.—*M.A.* (Cinema II, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.)

TOPSY-TURVY—Mike Leigh's brilliant re-creation of the most famous partnership in the British theatre—the collaboration of W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan in the glory era of imperial rule. There are elements here of a traditional bio-pic—failure, triumph, intimations of immortality—but none of the stodginess and self-congratulation that usually plague the form. Sullivan (Allan Corduner), a libertine who nevertheless had serious pretensions as a composer, and Gilbert (Jim Broadbent), formal, irascible, and asexual, but a great theatrical pro, are so dissimilar in temperament that they can hardly bear each other's company. Leigh suggests that the combination of sentimental languor and incisiveness produced the art of "The Mikado," whose preparation and first performance take up the second half of the movie. The authentic period stage lighting produces a glow on the painted faces; the fragile beauty of Sullivan's tunes is piercing when they are played, as they are here, at slower tempos than we are used to hearing. In all, one of the greatest movies about the theatre. With Lesley Manville, Timothy Spall, Ron Cook, and Wendy Nottingham.—*D.D.* (Paris.)



Through Jan. 23 at AMMI, "Mental Hygiene: Social Guidance Films 1945-1970" offers a rare showing of the generic morality films once shown in school classrooms.

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

I VITELLONI (1953)—Frustrated small-town boys with big ideas, the central characters are sons of indulgent, middle-class families, who cadge off their parents, loaf, and dream of women, riches, and glory. Their energies are wasted in idiotic pursuits; whatever dreams or ideals they have are pathetically childish or rotten. The director, Federico Fellini, observes the farce of their lives without condescension; his tone is satirical, yet warm and accepting—the distinctive Fellini tone, in his first fully confident piece of direction. The group suggests an American wolf pack. There is Fausto the flirt (Franco Fabrizi), who will become another unhappy, middle-class family man; plump, ludicrous Alberto the buffoon (Alberto Sordi); Leopoldo the poet (Leopoldo Trieste), whose naïve artistic illusions wilt when he is propositioned by an ancient homosexual actor; and Moraldo (Franco Interlenghi). Fellini's autobiographical hero, he is the only one who finds the guts to say goodbye to this futile provincial life. Screenplay by Fellini and Ennio Flaiano. In Italian.—*Pauline Kael* (Jan. 13; Anthology Film Archives.)

ALSO PLAYING

ALL ABOUT MY MOTHER (11/22/99): Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Eastside Playhouse, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.... **AMERICAN BEAUTY** (9/20/99): First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, The Screening Room, and State.... **AMERICAN MOVIE:** Film Forum.... **ANGELA'S ASHES:** Coronet Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.... **BEING JOHN MALKOVICH** (11/22/99): Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 62nd & Broadway, and Waverly.... **BICENTENNIAL MAN:** East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Sutton 1 and 2, and Union Square.... **BOYS DON'T CRY** (10/18-25/99): Quad Cinema and Union Square.... **THE CIDER HOUSE RULES** (12/13/99): Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Gotham Cinema, Kips Bay Theatre, and Lincoln Square.... **THE END OF THE AFFAIR** (12/6/99): BAM Rose Cinemas, Lincoln Square, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.... **42 UP:** Cinema Village.... **GALAXY QUEST:** Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea West, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.... **GIRL, INTERRUPTED:** Lincoln Square and Union Square.... **THE INSIDER** (11/8/99): Cinema 3rd Avenue and Union Square.... **LIBERTY HEIGHTS** (11/29/99): First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.... **THE LIMEY** (10/9/99): American Museum of the Moving Image.... **MANSFIELD PARK** (11/29/99): Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, and First & 62nd Cinemas.... **MR. DEATH:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.... **ONEGIN:** Cinema Village.... **PRINCESS MONOKOKE** (11/8/99): Cinema Village.... **ROSETTA** (11/8/99): Quad Cinema.... **SLEEPY HOLLOW** (11/22/99): Kips Bay Theatre and State.... **STUART LITTLE:** Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Union Square.... **SWEET AND LOWDOWN** (12/6/99): Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.... **THE THIRD MIRACLE:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.... **THREE SEASONS:** Quad Cinema.... **TOY STORY 2:** Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Sutton 1 and 2, and Village East Cinemas.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"Mental Hygiene: Social Guidance Films 1945-1970." A retrospective of the short instructive films shown in school classrooms throughout the postwar era. Guest curator and historian Ken Smith introduces each collection. Jan. 15 at 2: "Coronet & Centron."...Jan. 15 at 4: "Highway Safety."...Jan. 16 at 2: "Conformity."...Jan. 16 at 4: "Fun Films I."

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—A showcase of films released by Kino International. Jan. 13 at 7: "I Vitelloni" (†)....Jan. 13 at 9:15: "The Color of Pomegranates" (1969, Sergei Paradjanov; in Russian)....Jan. 14 at 7: "The General" (1926, Buster Keaton)....Jan. 14 at 9: "La Strada" (1954, Federico Fellini; in Italian)....Jan. 15 at 3: "Princess Tam Tam" (1935, Edmond Greville; in French) and "Zou Zou" (1934, Marc Allegret; in French)....Jan. 15 at 7 and Jan. 16 at 9: "Shadows of Our Forgotten Ancestors" (1965, Paradjanov; in Russian)....Jan. 15 at 9 and Jan. 16 at 4: "8 1/2" (1963, Fellini; in Italian)....Jan. 16 at 7: "The Bicycle Thief" (1949, Vittorio De Sica; in Italian)....Jan. 17 at 7: "The Seventh Seal" (1956, Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish)....Jan. 17 at 9:15: "Nosferatu—Eine Symphonie des Grauens" (1922, F. W. Murnau; in German)....Jan. 18 at 7: "Queen Kelly" (1931, Erich von Stroheim)....Jan. 18 at 9: "Happy Together" (1997, Wong Kar-wai; in Mandarin).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770)—Jan. 12 at 7 and 9:30: "Road Dogs" (1999, Detdrich McClure). As part of the "Black Cinema Café," a discussion with the filmmaker will follow the 7 P.M. screening....¶ A series of films with Harvey Keitel. Jan. 13 at 6 and 9: "Bad Timing/A Sensual Obsession" (†)....¶ A tribute to Sergio Leone, popularizer of the spaghetti Western. Jan. 14 at 9: "Once Upon a Time in the West" (1969)....¶ A series celebrating the centennial of Humphrey Bogart. Jan. 15 at 3, 6, and 9: "To Have and Have Not" (1944, Howard Hawks)....Jan. 16 at 3, 6, and 9: "The Big Sleep" (1946, Hawks).... ¶ The films of director Curtis Bernhardt, impresario of the "woman's film." Jan. 17 at 3, 6 and 9: "Juke Girl" (1942)....¶ Jan. 18 at 6 and 9: "Chungking Express" (1994, Wong Kar-wai; in Mandarin).

FILM FORUM, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—A retrospective of films written by Robert Riskin. Jan. 12: "Platinum Blonde" (1931, Frank Capra) and "Three Wise Girls" (1931, William Beaudine).... Jan. 13: "American Madness" (1932, Capra) and "The Miracle Woman" (1931, Capra).... ¶ From Jan. 14: "The Edge of the World" (1937, Michael Powell).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—New documentaries. Jan. 13 at 6 and Jan. 14 at 3: "Adiu Monde or Pierre and Claire's Story" (1997, Sandra Kogut; in French regional dialect) and "The End of the Journey" (1996, Carlos Nader; in Portuguese)....¶ Jan. 18 at 3 and 6: "L'Homme du Large" (1920, Marcel L'Herbier; in French)....¶ Through April 2000: A program of silent films, 1893 to 1928, from the museum's collection.

MUSEUM OF TELEVISION AND RADIO, 25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—Through Jan. 30: "Andy's Funhouse: The Andy Kaufman Special" (1979). (Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 1, Thursdays at 6, Fridays at 7, and Saturdays and Sundays at 1)....¶ Through Feb. 13: "Super Bowl: Super Showcase for Commercials." Frank Gifford narrates the ascendance of television's premier venue for new advertisements.

THE SCREENING ROOM, 54 Varick St. (332-2100)—Two classic splatter films. Jan. 14 at 12 A.M.: "Last House on the Left" (1972, Wes Craven)....Jan. 15 at 12 A.M.: "I Drink Your Blood" (1971, David E. Durston)....¶ A

Kirk Douglas retrospective. Jan. 15-16 at 12 P.M.: "There Was a Crooked Man" (1970, Joseph L. Mankiewicz)....Jan. 15-16 at 2:20: "Ace in the Hole" (1957, Billy Wilder).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—The fourth annual "Dance on Camera" festival. Jan. 14 at 2: "All-French Matinee, with a Twist"....Jan. 14 at 6:30: "Canada Dances"....Jan. 15 at 2: "A Major Tapper & 7 Avant-Garde Visions".... ¶ The Jewish Museum and the Film Society of Lincoln Center present "The New York Jewish Film Festival." Jan. 16 at 1: "Meyer from Berlin" (1918, Ernst Lubitsch; silent) and "Shoe Palace Pinkus" (1916, Lubitsch; silent)....Jan. 16 at 4: "The Wandering Jew" (1933, George Roland; in Yiddish).... Jan. 16 at 6:30 and Jan. 17 at 3: "After the End of the World" (1999, Ivan Nichev; in Bulgarian, Greek, Romany, and Turkish)....Jan. 16 at 9:15 and Jan. 17 at 1 and 6: "From Swastika to Jim Crow" (1999, Lori Cheatle and Martin D. Toub) and "Purim" (1998, Madeline Schwartzmann)....Jan. 17 at 8 and Jan. 18 at 6: "Jew-Boy Levi" (1999, Didi Danquart; in German)....Jan. 18 at 1 and 8:15: "Gloomy Sunday" (1999, Rolf Schübel; in German)....Jan. 18 at 3:15: "Closed Country" (1999, Kaspar Kasics; in French and German).

THEATRE ADDRESSES

(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077).
Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770).
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

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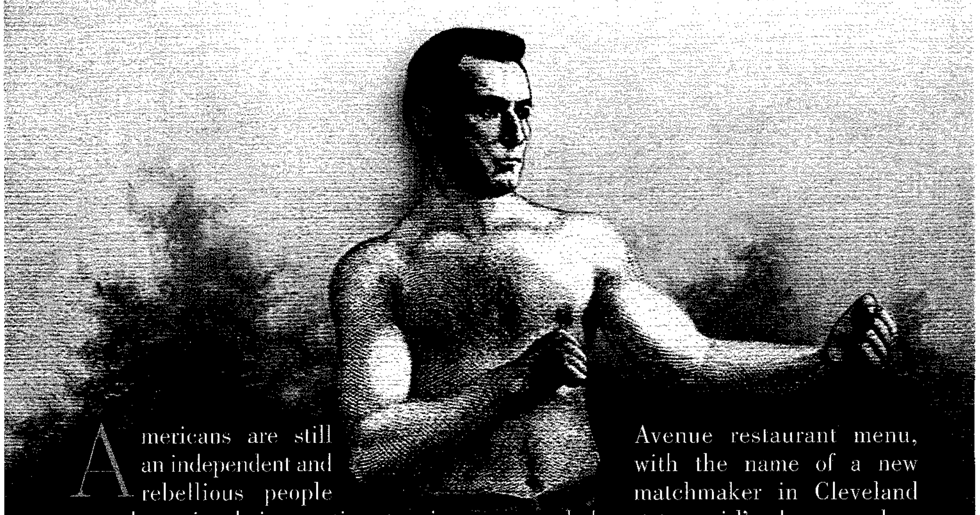

Americans are still an independent and rebellious people—at least in their reaction to signs. Stillman's gym, up the street from the Garden, offers no exception to our national habit of shrugging off small prohibitions. Hung prominently on the gray, nondescript walls facing the two training rings a poster reads: "No rubbish or spitting on the floor, under penalty of the law." If you want to see how the boys handle this one, stick around until everybody has left the joint and see what's left for the janitor to do. The floor is strewn with cigarettes smoked down to their stained ends, cigar butts chewed to soggy pulp, dried spittle, empty match cases, thumbed and trampled copies of the *News, Mirror* and *Journal*, open to the latest crime of passion or the race results, wadded gum, stubs of last night's fight at St. Nick's (managers comps), a torn-off cover of an Eighth Avenue restaurant menu, with the name of a new matchmaker in Cleveland scrawled next to a girl's phone number. Here on the dirty gray floor of Stillman's is the tell-tale debris of a world as sufficient unto itself as a walled city of the Middle Ages.

You enter this walled city by means of dark, grimy stairway that carries you straight up off Eighth Avenue into a large, stuffy, smoke-filled, hopeful, cynical, glistening-bodied world. The smells of this world are sour and pungent, a stale gamey odor blended of sweat and liniment, worn fight gear, cheap cigars and too many bodies, clothed and unclothed, packed into a room with no noticeable means of ventilation.

To read more of this excerpt and to learn about upcoming boxing events, visit **www.hbo.com/boxing**.

The HEART & SOUL of BOXING

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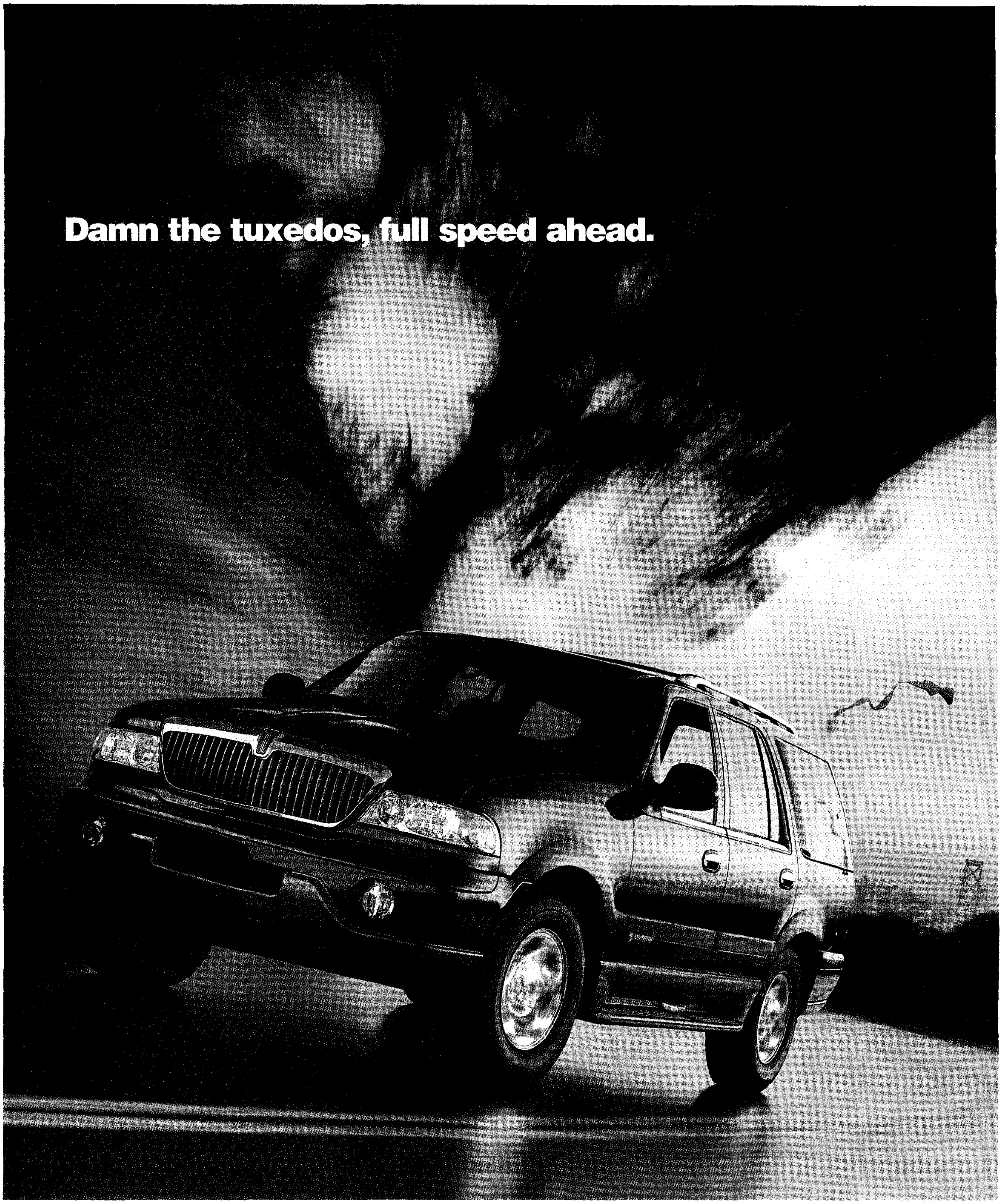

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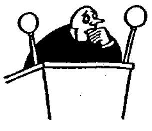
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT

The execution of youth.



In the summer of 1924, in a stifling Chicago courtroom, America's most celebrated trial lawyer, Clarence Darrow, delivered what is still America's most celebrated oration against capital punishment. The guilt of Darrow's clients, Nathan Leopold, Jr., and Richard Loeb, was not in question. Neither was the depravity of their crime: they had kidnapped and bludgeoned to death a fourteen-year-old boy, and they had done it for fun. An indignant press and public demanded that they be hanged. To save them from that fate was Darrow's only goal. He spoke for twelve hours, piling argument upon ingenious argument—he even suggested that Leopold had been corrupted by reading Nietzsche.

Darrow's speech was stirring and brilliant. But Judge John Caverly rejected all his arguments except one. "The court is moved chiefly by the consideration of the age of the defendants," he wrote. "This determination appears to be in accordance with the progress of criminal law all over the world and with the dictates of enlightened humanity. . . . The court believes it is within his province to decline to impose the sentence of death on persons who are not of full age." At the time, Leopold was nineteen years old; Loeb was eighteen. They received life sentences.

This week, in Virginia, two people are scheduled to be executed for crimes they committed when they were even younger than Leopold and Loeb: Chris Thomas, now twenty-six, who killed his girlfriend's parents in 1990, and Steve Roach, now twenty-three, who murdered an elderly neighbor in 1993. Glen McGinnis, now twenty-six, is scheduled to die later this month in Texas for killing a laundry attendant nine years ago. In all three cases, the chance of further appeals is remote. Twenty-three of the thirty-eight states that allow the death penalty permit the execution of juvenile offenders, some as young as sixteen. Governor George W. Bush, who has presided over more than a hundred executions, has stated that the "current status of the State of Texas"—allowing seventeen-year-olds to be strapped to the death gurney—"is appropriate."

In 1988, the Supreme Court narrowly made it unconstitutional to execute anyone under sixteen, but some believe it's a decision that is open to challenge. Two states, Florida and Montana, recently raised the minimum age for execution—from sixteen to seventeen and from sixteen to eighteen, respectively. On the other hand, partly in response to a recent spate of juvenile shootings, such as the case of Nathaniel Abraham, a thirteen-year-old boy in Pontiac, Michigan, who will be sentenced this week on a second-degree-murder charge, there have been pleas from elected officials in some states to lower the legal age to as young as eleven. Thirteen men convicted of crimes committed as children have been executed since the death penalty was reinstated, in 1976. Today, seventy more await execution.

The two factors that Judge Caverly cited in sparing the lives of Leopold and Loeb—the progress of criminal law all over the world and the dictates of enlightened humanity—have fared differently during the intervening decades. Criminal law around the world has indeed made progress. Capital punishment has been abolished in Europe. In Russia, Boris Yeltsin recently commuted seven hundred death sentences. According to an Amnesty International report issued last month, only five other countries besides the United States—Iran, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen—have executed juvenile offenders in the last decade, and Yemen has since banished the practice.

In this country, David Tanenhaus, a historian of juvenile justice, points to "a general loss of faith in children and the rehabilitative idea." Most states now have provisions to try juveniles accused of certain offenses in adult court. Some

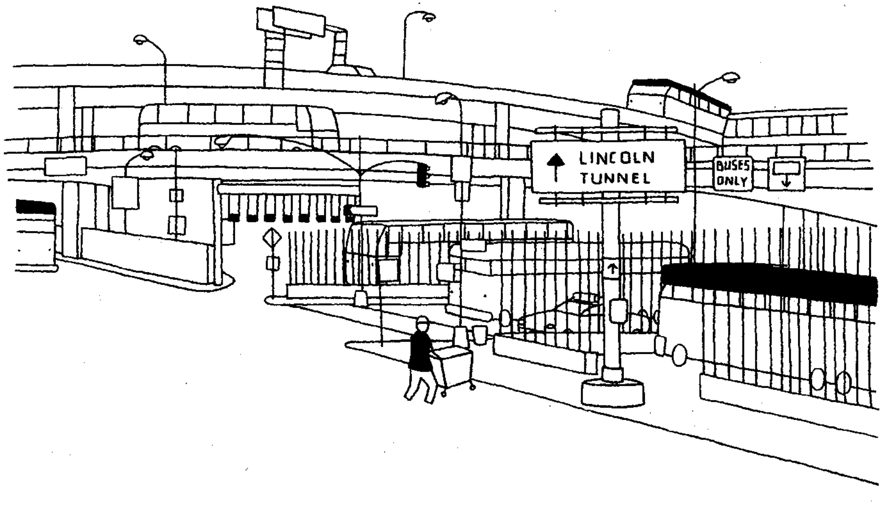


ILLUSTRATION BY LAURENT CILLUFFO

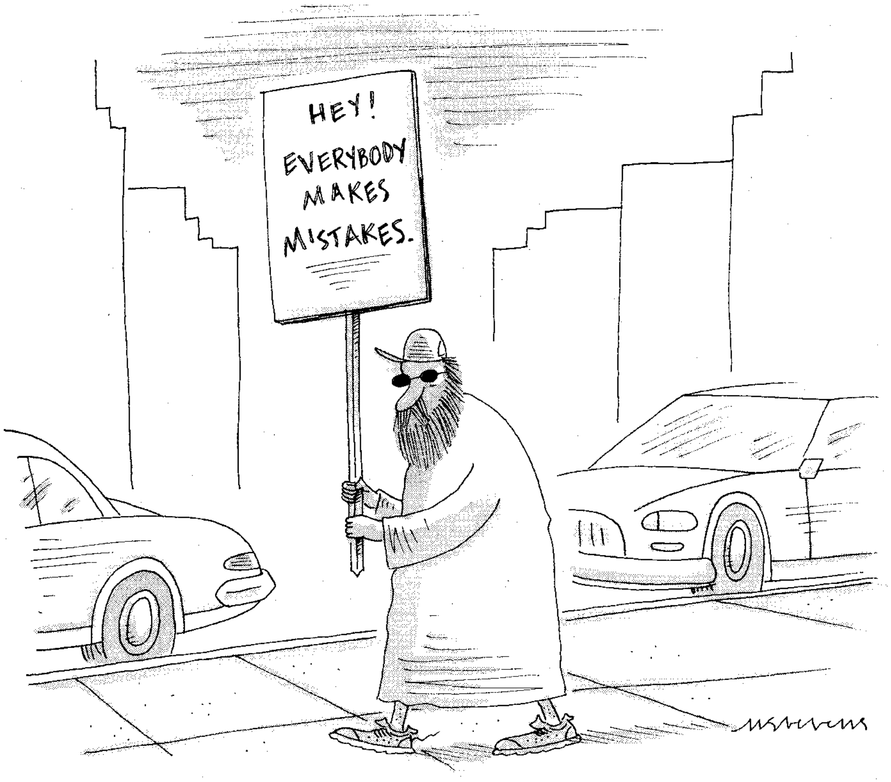
states house children in adult prisons. Executing children seems to be a logical extension of such thinking. But that thinking is cruel and perverse. Youth is more than just a chronological fact. The young are susceptible to influence and impulse, and so they are even less likely than adults to be swayed by the "deterrent" effect of capital punishment. The death penalty for adults is an abandonment of hope. The death penalty for children is an expression of despair.

—Alex Kotlowitz

DEPT. OF HOOPLA

The New Year stumbles in.

It was reported last week that eighty per cent of Americans stayed home to enjoy the opening of the new millennium. This was a startling figure, although it requires further analysis: we need to know how many celebrants were clasped in the bosom of their families, and how many sealed themselves into storm cellars with a candle, a .45, and enough tortilla chips to last three months. Contrast the extrovert spirit that prevailed in Australia, say, where government statistics have revealed that the only citizens who failed to leave the house on December 31st were the McGarry family of Perth. The city of Sydney, which, despite the looming Olympics, looks pretty happy about itself, laid on an extravagant party in the harbor.



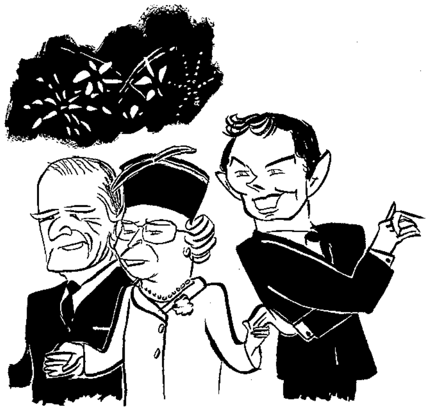
Whether this made it the Greatest Show on Earth was a matter of inflamed debate. China—the place that invented fireworks, as well as noodles, the printing press, and peeling students off tank tracks—emblazoned the heavens above the Great Wall. Layers of light ascended the Washington Monument and, with geometric elegance, the Eiffel Tower. In a daring act of multiculturalism, the good people of Tonga rose at midnight to sing the "Hallelujah Chorus" from Handel's "Messiah." Then, there was New York. Estimates put the number of revellers at more than two million, of whom at least forty-six were resident New Yorkers. Nobody in his or her right mind headed for Times Square, for the simple reason that if you wanted to get out of your right mind you had to go elsewhere; Mayor Giuliani, not content with gluing shut the manholes in case anyone was reading the Koran in the sewers, had declared midtown to remain an alcohol-free zone for the entire evening. The joke is that the only visitors who would applaud such a move were the same Islamic fundamentalists he was trying to keep out. One wonders how major an event would have to be before the Mayor thought it worthy of a beer. As rogue Korean warheads plummet toward Forty-second Street, will he announce free hazelnut mocha for children under ten? One thing is certain: thanks to the Giuliani precautions, grandparents in 2080 will be able to regale the kids with tales of that amazing night when they stood shivering beneath a giant underpants billboard and sipped apple Snapple.

For once, New York could have taken a lesson from London. There, underfoot, as revellers walked across Blackfriars Bridge at two in the morning, empty champagne bottles made a lush pastoral carpet of green and gold. At the Oxo Tower, on the South Bank, where the eighth-floor Restaurant, Bar and Brasserie threw the most geographically desirable party of the night, cocktail specialists could pass seamlessly from a Y2K—basically, a gingered-up White Lady—to a One Second To . . . , the effects of which could still be felt Eight Hours After . . . Dancing took place beneath fluorescent, Warholish portraits of Faces of the Millennium. There were, on balance, few experiences more suited to a fading, farcical century than trying to moonwalk to "Blame It on the Boogie" under a picture of Bertrand Russell.

Russell, of course, blamed it on expansionist Western capitalism. He would not have relished the last hours of 1999. The rule governing fireworks, for instance, is quite simple. If x is the amount of money that it would be prudent to spend on your fireworks display, and if y is the number of people whom you expect to attend, then the actual expenditure should be $3x + y$. There is a further rule, which states that on the occasion of a new century the equation should change to $3(x + y)$. Real fireworks addicts whisper darkly of y to the power of x, but that is unrealistic. The London fireworks, launched from a string of sixteen barges along the Thames, were as intemperate as one could have wished. The last time the city took so apocalyptic a pounding was in 1940, when the Luftwaffe flattened the docks; now, as then, St. Paul's Cathedral vanished in the smoke and slowly reappeared, ghost gray. What better than harmless hellfire to presage a fresh start?

The most fitting thing about London's millennial effort was its blend of new technological hope and comforting, old-fashioned screwups. The waiting crowds were promised a wall of fire, two hundred feet high, that would flash up the Thames at eight hundred miles an hour, presumably singeing everything in its path. The mind reeled at the idea of a million British subjects beginning the new century with no eyebrows. In the end, nothing happened; the wall failed to ignite, and the London Eye, a four-hundred-and-forty-three-foot Ferris wheel near Waterloo Bridge, failed a safety inspection. Down in Greenwich, the place where time is timed, it emerged on New Year's Eve that, of the $1.2 billion dollars spent on the Millennium Dome, almost none had been set aside for postage stamps to stick on invitations; the great and the good were therefore, to the delight of the moderate and the naughty, made to wait in line with ID for up to four hours before entering what is, in effect, the world's largest diaphragm.

Once inside, the ten thousand visitors were treated to a floor show, a plastic glass of champagne, and a prayer. As the New Year broke, they launched into a mass rendition of "Auld Lang Syne." Singers crossed their arms and linked hands with those on either side, as custom demands; unfortunately, custom doesn't say what to do if the woman adjacent to you happens to be the Queen of England. Samuel Johnson was once asked why he had not wowed King George III with one-liners. "It was not for me to bandy civilities with my Sovereign," he replied. Tony Blair is nothing if not a bandy man. He took the left hand of his sovereign and pumped it proudly up and down. The Queen offered the other hand to her husband but declined to cross her arms, the result being that she was forced to stand there and flap weakly like a chicken. The set of her mouth was the highlight of the evening: as billions of viewers looked on, Her Majesty assumed the steady, thunderous expression of a nun at a Robert Mapplethorpe exhibit. No doubt she was reflecting that, had she been the first Elizabeth rather than the second, she could have had the Prime Minister's entrails broiled in front of his eyes.

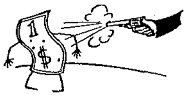


Prince Philip, Queen Elizabeth, and Tony Blair

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

But the moment passed; a good time was had by nearly all. The world chose not to end, or even to shut down; computer wonks everywhere breathed easy once again and fingered their wads of overtime. The millennium bug has thus far failed to nip; the only substantial glitch was traced to Russia, where a software error caused a pneumonic lush to hand over nuclear codes to a war-hungry spook. The new President chose to be photographed in a patterned zip-up cardigan; if Mr. Putin's foreign policy turns out to be as aggressive as his taste in knitwear, 2000 promises to be, at the very least, a colorful year. Maybe those fireworks were just an appetizer, after all. —ANTHONY LANE

A LETTER TO PUFF DADDY



[Sean (Puff Daddy) Combs] was supposedly flashing wads of cash inside Manhattan's crowded Club New York—arrogantly tossing it about like confetti. . . . One annoyed man reportedly threw a stack of bills at Combs. . . . Combs brandished a gun, and one of his artists, a rapper known as Shyne, drew a 9mm Ruger and opened fire.—*Newsweek, January 10, 2000.*

DEAR MR. DADDY,

I am writing to apply for a position with your posse. I am available to start hanging with you 24-7, effective immediately.

You're probably saying to yourself, "I already have a huge entourage—what do I need some other clown for?" Well, the next time some guy throws a stack of money at you, wouldn't it be great to have someone in your posse whose job it is to catch the money before it even gets to you, thereby avoiding an unpleasant—and unnecessary—dis?

Mr. Daddy, I am that clown.

While no one has ever thrown a stack of money at *me*, I feel that catching flying stacks of money is the sort of work I'm cut out for. I always bend down to pick up money on the street, for example, and I can't tell you how many coins I've fished out of couches. Catching a stack of money should be a snap for a sharp-eyed fellow like me.

And here's the beauty part: not only will I catch the stack of money—I'll dispose of it, permanently, allowing you to enjoy the rest of your evening dis-free.

What will I do with the stack of money? Maybe I'll go to Brooks Brothers and buy a new pair of cotton twill pants, or maybe I'll get that new Palm VII I've had my eye on. It really depends on how much money is in the stack of money.

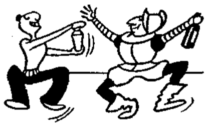
I wouldn't expect you to hire me sight unseen. If you like, I could come by your offices, and you and the members of your posse could take turns throwing stacks of money at me.

In closing, I have only one request: if you decide to hire me, I'd prefer it if you could start throwing money around like confetti in the early part of the evening, say, seven-thirty to nine. I've never been much of a "night person."

Sincerely,
ANDY (STACKY) BOROWITZ

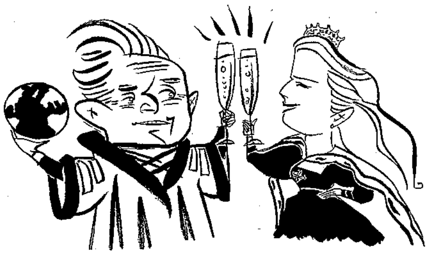
DRESS-UP DEPT.

The well-heeled and the wonky toast the millennium.

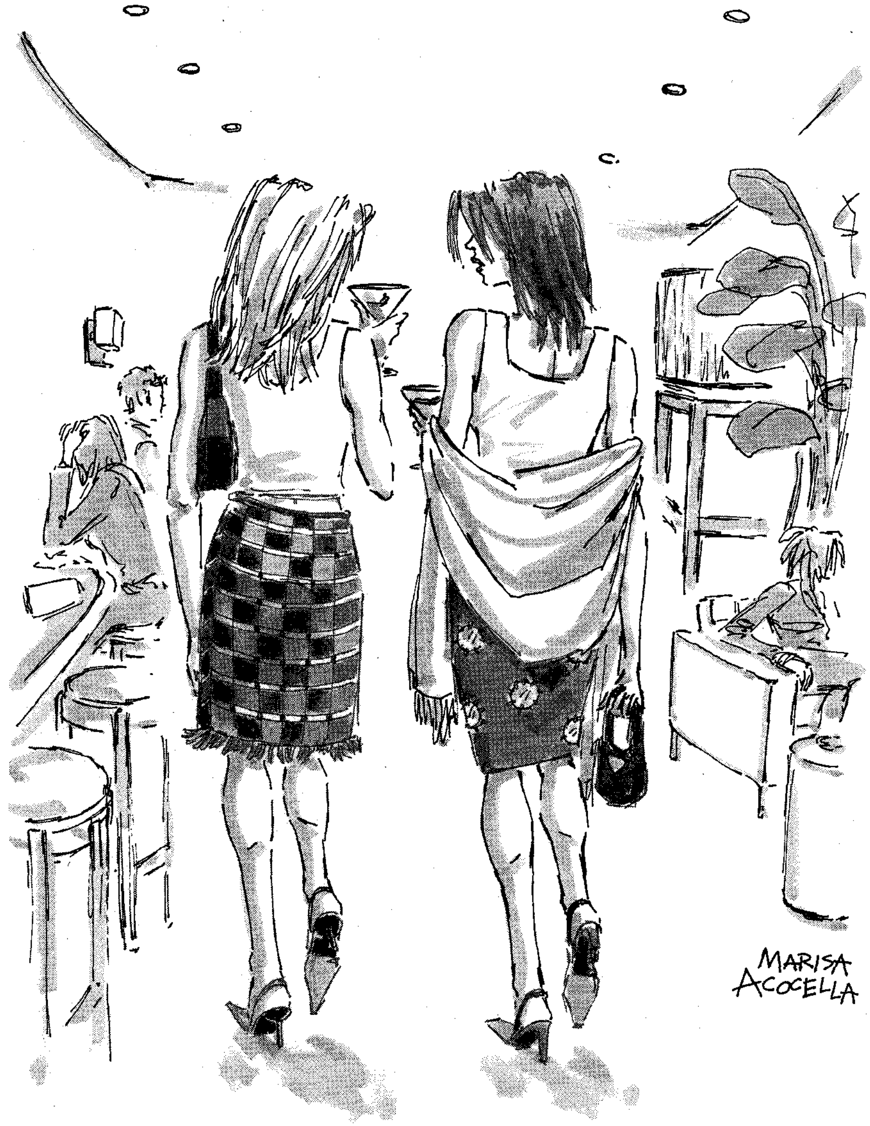


"DRESS as your favorite figure of the past millennium," the silver-embossed invitation to George and Susan Soros's New Year's Eve party said, and most guests did as they were bid. Shortly before seven, Galileo, Erasmus, and St. Francis of Assisi, not to mention Amelia Earhart and several Audrey Hepburns, gathered outside the Soroses' Fifth Avenue apartment, where a fleet of minibuses was on hand to ferry them up to the speculator-cum-philanthropist's country estate in Katonah. Passing through iron gates, the distinguished guests approached a large red brick mansion, with a slate roof and a modern extension jutting out of one side—which, on closer inspection, turned out to be a fully equipped sports atrium. Once inside, they were greeted by liveried servants in white wigs. The Soroses, famously kind hosts, had a rack of extra costumes standing by for those who had overlooked, or simply forgotten, their previous instructions. Jagdish Bhagwati, an eminent professor of economics at Columbia, chose to be the Emperor of Japan. His wife, Padma Desai, another noted economist, opted for the Empress of India.

After being individually announced by a butler, the guests drank cocktails in a tented area around the swimming pool. "It was such a phantasmagoria," said Gloria Deák, who fulfilled a lifetime ambition by dressing as Gloria Swanson. (Her husband, the historian Istvan Deák, came as Noël Coward.) On the walls hung ten large oil canvases, one for every century of the second millennium, and each featuring an image of the hosts. Beneath these modest portraits, George and Susan Soros greeted their guests in person: George a trim and smiling Christopher Columbus, Susan a striking Queen Isabella of Spain. The crowd numbered about two hundred and fifty, and there were many familiar faces in unfamiliar garb: Steve Brill, the publisher of the magazine *Brill's Content*, had come as Winston Churchill, complete with top hat and cigar (in truth, the cigar was no stretch); Paul Volcker, the former chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, made an imperious Zeus (nobody dared question his grasp of the calendar); Zbigniew Brzezinski, the former national-security adviser, was a spirited Karl Marx (although he told some guests that he was Father Christmas); and the former British diplomat Sir James Murray, a sprightly octogenarian, entered in a bright-yellow jacket, delighted to be announced as Hugh Hefner.



George and Susan Soros



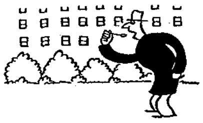
"You don't have any time? Try fitting Taoist sex into your schedule."

After a lengthy cocktail hour, the revellers took a footbridge across the pool—some stopping to stare at two gold-clad hired nymphs cavorting in the water—to the high-ceilinged atrium, where dinner was served. As Genghis Khan and Henry VIII and the rest tucked into lobster risotto, a troupe of trapeze acrobats whizzed to and fro above their heads. The acrobats were young, lithe, and dressed, or partly dressed, as signs of the zodiac. Two buff young fellows made a particularly strong impression, grinding sinuously against each other in an arresting interpretation of Gemini. "There was a beautiful young woman writhing above me as I ate," Bhagwati later recalled. "My wife said, 'Watch out! She's going to fall on you.' I said, 'I hope she does.'" When the assembly could avert its eyes from the sights above, there was music, including a piece composed specially for the occasion by Lewis Flinn and performed by a small orchestra.

At midnight, the crowd counted out the old year in fine voice, and gave the new one a resounding cheer. As the guests set off back to the city, at least some of them stared at the bronze medals they had been handed on the way out and wondered if the dawning millennium could ever match such understated splendor. Their hosts, in any case, had no such doubts. Beneath etched profiles of George and Susan Soros, the medals featured the following inscription: "Enlightened by the past. Embraced by the present. Empowered by the future." —JOHN CASSIDY

DEPT. OF AMPLIFICATION

Updating the smallpox vaccine.



A REALLY big act of bioterrorism has never occurred, as far as anyone knows, although the F.B.I. recorded more than thirty threats or attempts at bioterror during just the first week of January this year. One can only assume that sooner or later some terrorist will succeed, and an infectious organism will be deliberately released on a large population. The most dangerous bioweapon on the planet is *Variola major*, a form of the smallpox virus. Smallpox mirrors the Black Death of the Middle Ages in its virulence and contagiousness. During the nineteen-seventies, it was eradicated as a disease that circulates in the human population, and officially it exists only in two laboratory freezers, one in the United States and one in Russia. Unofficially, illicit stocks are almost certainly being kept in several other countries, including Iraq and North Korea. There is a vaccine for smallpox, but the World Health Organization keeps only about one dose on hand for every twelve thousand people on earth. In any case, the vaccine wears off: most people today could catch smallpox easily, even if they were vaccinated in the past. The consequences of a bioterrorist act involving smallpox would be devastating.

Efforts to create a meaningful stockpile of smallpox vaccine in the United States, as described in this magazine last summer ("The Demon in the Freezer," July 12th), were going nowhere for a long time. The process was mired in interagency rivalries and the different agendas of military and civilian planners. But late last August, Jeffrey Koplan, the new director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, decided to put an end to the bureaucratic fumbling. He called a meeting of the main players from the Pentagon, the White House, the Food and Drug Administration, the National Institutes of Health, and the Department of Health and Human Services. Some two dozen officials flew to Atlanta and gathered around a long table in a room near Koplan's office. One participant, who took notes, said that after the door was closed, Jeff Koplan made it clear—very calmly and politely—that no one would be allowed to leave the room until there was a plan for creating an adequate stockpile of smallpox vaccine. "I want to know the plan for next week and for next month. I want to see timetables. When are you going to get this done?" he said. The meeting wouldn't end until everyone in the room was in agreement.

JEFF KOPLAN is a thin man in his mid-fifties, with sparse blond-gray hair, wire-rimmed glasses, and pale-blue eyes. He dresses in gray suits and colorless ties, but he listens to rock and roll, bluegrass, and the blues, and he once played the mandolin. Koplan is one of the very few doctors in the world who have had hands-on experience managing patients who are dying of smallpox.

Koplan encountered smallpox in 1973. He had just finished his medical residency, and had joined the C.D.C. as an officer in the Epidemic Intelligence Service. He was sent to Bangladesh during the world's last outbreaks of *Variola major*. At the time, Koplan had a beard, and hair down to his shoulders, and he brought along Grateful Dead tapes to listen to in Bangladesh. He set up a ward in the Infectious Disease Hospital in Dacca, took a crash course in the Bengali language, and hired a man to buy food for the patients, since the hospital didn't supply any. He learned how to diagnose smallpox with his fingertips. "A blind person can diagnose smallpox from the feel of the lesions," he says. "Smallpox lesions have a velvety feel. While they look like bubbles on top of the skin, they feel much more deep-seated." Koplan found that nothing he did could change the outcome of the disease. Twenty-six years later, he did not want to have to manage an outbreak of smallpox in the American population.

The meeting Koplan called in August was extraordinary. Such meetings almost never occur in the federal government, where agencies guard their terrain, and where multi-agency decisions are made in tiny increments through negotiations among policymakers. Koplan refused to comment about the meeting to me, even off the record.

The meeting lasted for many hours, and when it was over the representatives from the F.D.A. had agreed to a number of steps that would allow more rapid testing and licensing of the vaccine. The C.D.C. said it would take over management of the actual creation of the stockpile and would line up a biotech company to manufacture the vaccine. In perhaps three years' time—although there are no guarantees that this will occur—we could have a vaccine ready for mass production and stockpiling. It could not be used for routine, large-scale vaccinations like those that took place in the past, since the vaccine could make some people sick—people whose immune systems have been compromised by chemotherapy, or H.I.V., or an organ transplant. But the F.D.A. would release the vaccine in a national emergency.

A national stockpile of smallpox vaccine is more than just a prophylactic against disesase; it would also provide a deterrent to terrorists, who probably would not choose to use a weapon that creates few casualties. And if there was extra production capacity for the vaccine, the United States would be in a position to whip out millions of doses for any other country that was threatened. This could effectively remove smallpox from the military arsenal of Saddam Hussein in a nonviolent way.

Jeff Koplan managed to affect public-health policy and national defense in a profound way in a matter of hours, but the moment was, for him, tinged with a sense of failure. "It's almost inconceivable that the incredible international human effort that went into eradicating smallpox could be overturned by malicious human acts," he says. "People subsumed all their differences working side by side to eradicate smallpox—Russians, Americans, Brazilians, Indians. In East Africa, wars were literally put on hold, and truces held, while everyone went into the field to get this done. It's such a painful thing to consider that someone could use smallpox for a negative purpose, particularly when you are aware that it could cause hundreds of millions of deaths."

I asked someone who had been at the August meeting if people were mad at Koplan for locking them into that room in Atlanta.

"I had a feeling they were grateful," he said.

—RICHARD PRESTON

THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL

FLAWED HERO

John McCain creates the confessional candidacy.

BY JOE KLEIN

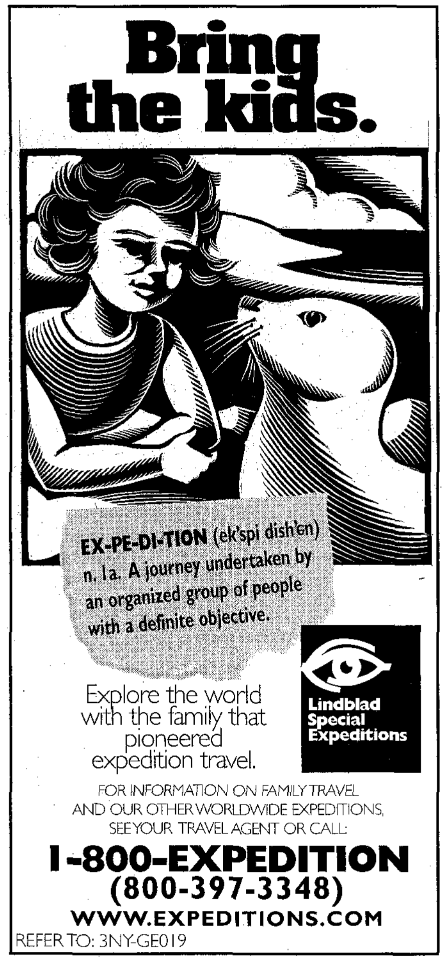
In New Hampshire, about a month ago, the audiences for Senator John McCain's campaign appearances began to change in a subtle way. The crowds were not only larger than those attracted by any of the other Presidential candidates but also more diverse. The military veterans who'd been the core of McCain's support were still appearing in brigade strength, along with other Republicans, mostly of the Main Street school (that is, fiscal conservatives without much patience for their party's religious or supply-side sky divers). But now liberals and independents were beginning to show up, too. They came sheepishly and, at times, combatively, drawn by word of mouth: this candidate was said to put on quite a show.

Normally, the New Hampshire electorate regards Presidential pretenders with the weary condescension of a burned-out theatre critic appraising the umpteenth revival of "The Best Man." The politicians, silver-haired and sleek, come and go quadrennially, promising tax cuts and "revolutionary" reforms. All but a few depart chastened. (Even the winners tend to stagger out, shell-shocked by the intensity of the ritual.) But McCain's experience has been different: he appears to be drawing strength—not just electoral support but personal sustenance—from New Hampshire. Instead of hunkering down defensively, as most candidates do when they are in the midst of a difficult campaign, he appears to be letting go—unfurling himself, testing the limits of political improvisation.

In the process, the Senator from Arizona is raising the eternal, inevitably forlorn hope that politics can be made different, more "honorable"—cleaner—somehow. This is a risky gambit; self-proclaimed political reformers tend to get themselves defrocked as frequently as televangelists do. Politics has always been (and, one hopes, will always be) a dodgy trade marked by sly compromises and circumlocutions. Even the practice of business as usual can be made to appear unseemly, as McCain found out in early January when he was accused of writing letters to the Federal Communications Commission to expedite a television-licensing decision in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, that affected one of his campaign contributors, a telecommunications magnate named Lowell Paxson. The Senator responded, quite appropriately, that he has written scores of such letters over the years, for friends and non-contributors alike; in this case, his attempt to hustle along the F.C.C.—he didn't request favorable action, just a speedy result—was no secret and, indeed, had been praised editorially by the Pittsburgh *Post-Gazette.*

The spectacle of a man on a white horse attempting to traverse a muddy field is one of the most compelling in public life, and McCain's ride has been particularly entertaining. He has pretty much abandoned his stump speech. He'll tell some jokes, make a few opening remarks—usually about the need for campaign-finance reform or the sorry state of the military (or, combining the two, about the impact of pork-barrel spending on a military in which some soldiers are eligible for food stamps)—and then quickly open the floor to questions, which he'll answer until his staff drags him away. The mood of the crowds is more appreciative than worshipful. The questions are sophisticated, detailed, and often hostile; McCain allows interrogative rants and invites follow-up questions. He enjoys the confrontation; indeed, he seems touched by the ceremony of democracy.

One evening in Durham, a university community known for its liberalism, a large crowd was shoehorned into a local mansion and spent several hours grilling the candidate. A man who owned a factory in China asked if McCain favored excise taxes on foreign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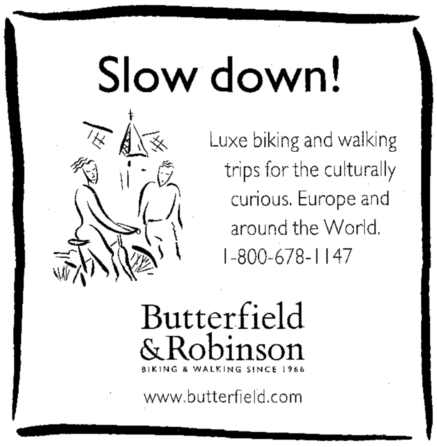
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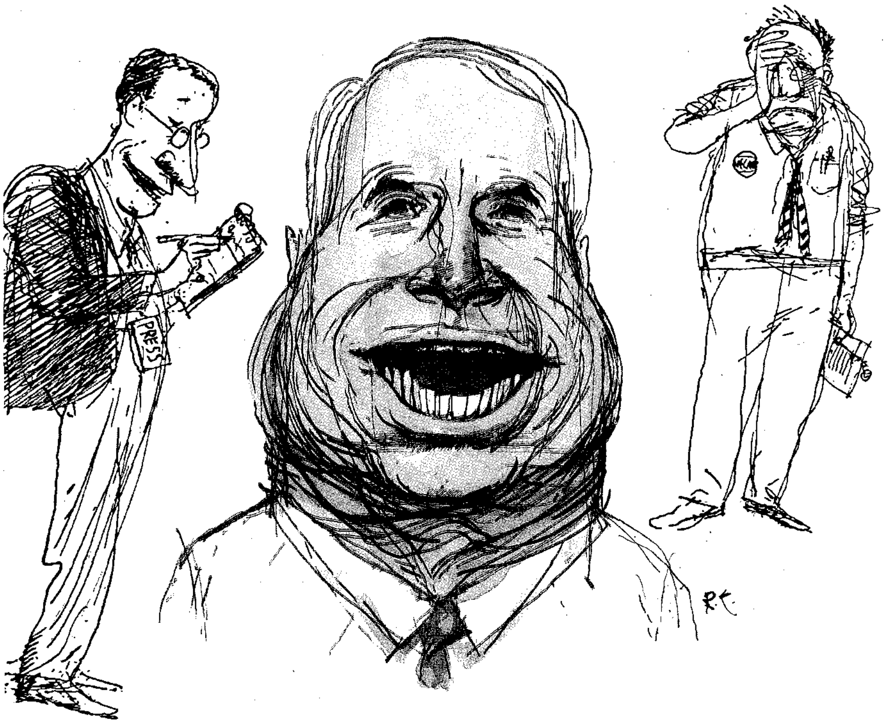
goods that were produced with unacceptable labor and environmental standards. The candidate's first reaction was reflexive and vehement: he was a free trader, he opposed excise taxes. But the questioner clearly was well informed and he had a point, which he reiterated: Shouldn't overseas factories that do the right thing for their workers and the environment get some sort of competitive break? McCain was intrigued; he asked his staff to seek out the questioner afterward, to find out how he could learn more.



Perhaps the most powerful quality in the Senator's arsenal of attractions is an unrelenting candor that verges on self-reproach.

RICHARD THOMPSON

The Senator was more abrupt with a woman who demanded the release from prison of Leonard Peltier, a Native American activist, or terrorist, depending on your point of view. McCain opposed the release, with steely conviction. He was gleefully combative when asked about the funding of public broadcasting. "It may have been a good thing when there were only three networks," he said, "but there are so many more choices now. . . . You look like you're itching to follow up. Fire away."

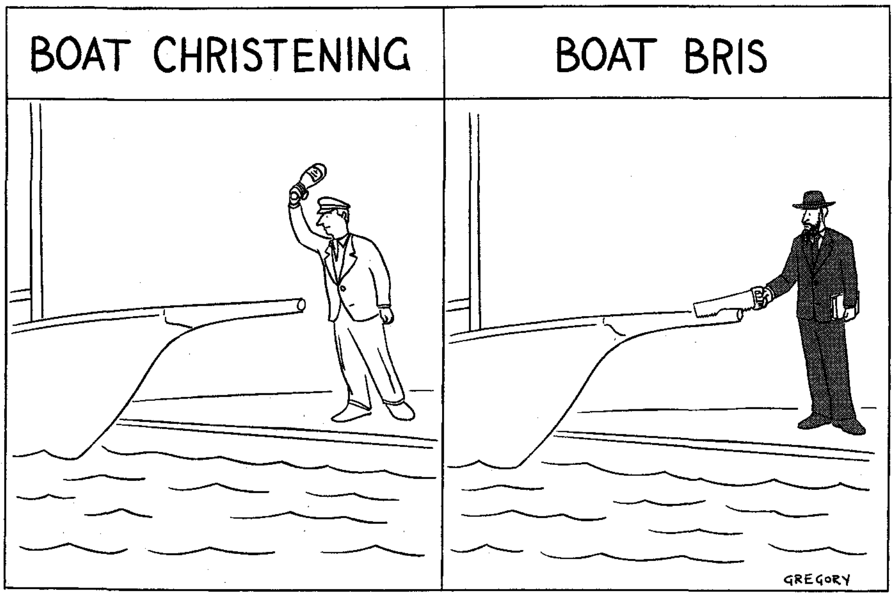
"But all the other networks have commercials," his questioner persisted.

"And public television has those boring fund drives," McCain pushed back. "I'd rather watch commercials. At least there's some creativity involved."

There was laughter and applause, even from those who were appalled by the Senator's position. That is often the case now. "I can't vote for him. I'm a liberal and there's his position on abortion, for one thing," said Marjorie Smith, of Durham. Smith, a Democratic state legislator, went to see McCain at a town-hall meeting in Newmarket. "But," she added, with a significant pause, "you listen to him and you think, This is the politician who could do a 'Nixon in China' on wasteful military spending and corporate welfare. You ask him a question, and he answers it directly. He is obviously very well informed. He's a very effective speaker—he's got a lot of energy." Unlike the Democratic candidates for President? She rolled her eyes and said again, wistfully, "But I couldn't vote for him."

John McCain's candidacy has become the emotional centerpiece of this Presidential campaign; he is at the heart of the story. His biography is the most compelling, his rallies are the most fun, his crusade against the Republican Party establishment is the most dramatic. His personal values represent an ethical touchstone—and all the other candidates seem daunted by his moral stature and personal popularity. In the days before the campaigns took their Christmas break, both Democratic candidates sought to increase their authority by associating themselves with McCain: Bill Bradley staged an elaborate handshake agreement to fight for campaign-finance reform with McCain; and Al Gore attempted to catch up by asserting, during a debate with Bradley, that he'd co-sponsored arms-control legislation with the Senator from Arizona—"the Gore-McCain legislation," he said proudly. The Republican front-runner, George W. Bush, has made repeated, extravagant efforts to express affection and admiration for his opponent, although he has become markedly less respectful as McCain's challenge has become more credible. In early January, the two men sparred contentiously over tax cuts and campaign-finance reform at the first Republican debate of the New Year. Bush compared McCain's positions with those of Al Gore. "If he thinks I'm like Gore," McCain said afterward, "he's spinning like Clinton."

In addition to the obvious respect paid McCain by his fellow-politicians, two other public infatuations seem to be going on. He is, quite obviously, the media's favorite candidate. The rolling press conference and political salon that takes place daily in the Senator's campaign bus presents reporters with a dizzying level of access to a Presidential contender. The bus is called the Straight Talk Express but might just as easily be named the Stockholm Syndrome, candidate and press corps locked in a steamy, involuntary psychological symbiosis. The "I, too, have a weakness for John McCain" sentence has become a standard disclaimer in accounts of his candidacy which have appeared in political magazines of all ideologies. In a *Times Magazine* article, one writer admitted to being so smitten with McCain that he could not credibly cover the man; others, like Mike Wallace, of "Sixty Minutes," have publicly admitted a desire to drop everything and go to work for him. But far more significant than the media's crisis of the heart is the public reaction in the perpetually skeptical state of New Hampshire, where McCain is now leading George W. Bush in most polls. This may be a momentary phenomenon: Bush, unlike



McCain, has a national organization; he is the anointed candidate of a very orderly political party. McCain won't have the time to replicate the intimacy of his New Hampshire operation in many other states. But a national McCain surge is no longer unimaginable.

The sources of the Senator's popularity are both obvious and not. He is a war hero who has survived unimaginable physical suffering with grace and honor. His experiences in a North Vietnamese prison camp—five and a half years in captivity, more than two of them in solitary confinement—are now legend. He was tortured repeatedly, in part because he refused an offer of early release made after his captors learned that his father was the admiral in charge of military operations in the Pacific. It is difficult to name many other public figures who have been willing to endure pain—even mere political pain—for the sake of honor or principle.

But a more subtle, and perhaps the most powerful, quality in the Senator's arsenal of attractions is an unrelenting candor that verges on self-reproach—an analysand's candor, almost. This is rare in politics, and it has served McCain extremely well in the campaign. One doesn't see Al Gore beating up on himself for the fund-raising excesses of 1996; or Bill Bradley admitting that he has chickened out on his previous, impolitic positions on ethanol subsidies or the need for Social Security reform; or George W. Bush being self-critically introspective in any way at all. "McCain is not like anybody you and I have met along the way in recent American politics," says Larry Smith, a defense-policy specialist and former adviser to Gary Hart, who has known McCain for more than twenty years. "He comes from some ancient place. His sense of honor is not at all contemporary. It is absolute, not relative. And that makes him difficult for us to understand at first—all the recent political models we've seen are variations on the theme of artifice. The question of each campaign is 'How will I present myself to the public?' That is a question McCain doesn't ask himself. He has no choice in the matter."

Larry Smith met John McCain in the late nineteen-seventies, when McCain served as the Navy's liaison to the United States Senate. The years immediately after Vietnam were a particularly fertile time for defense-policy wonks; there was a fierce debate about why the military had failed, and how to make it more effective. McCain befriended the senators at the heart of the debate—Gary Hart, William Cohen, of Maine (who is now the Secretary of Defense), and John Tower, of Texas. Cohen was the best man at McCain's second marriage, to Cindy Lou Hensley, in 1980; Hart was an usher. McCain received much of his education in foreign and defense policy during that period. "There was a lot of talk about a new, evolving, more flexible military doctrine called 'maneuver' strategy," Smith says, and then laughs. "In fact, McCain is using one of the basic 'maneuver' principles of aerial attack right now. You find the opponent's soft spot, which in this case is New Hampshire, identify your strongest tactical path, which in this case is mobilizing the veterans, and then try to get inside his reaction loop—the technical term is O.O.D.A. loop—and disorient him. I think he had all of this worked out a year ago."

One is always struck by John McCain's physical limitations: the inflexibility of his arms after his torture in Vietnam (he cannot brush his own hair); the rat-a-tat, clenched-jaw speaking style that doesn't vary much in pitch or affect, which makes the nihilistic comedy all the more unexpected and effective—and also makes his excruciating personal struggle between political ambition and a very strict sense of honor poignant in a way that politics usually isn't.

This is not to say that McCain never makes political calculations. His positions on the most vexing social issues seem an awkward attempt to hopscotch the parameters of conservative Republican orthodoxy, the Goldwaterite libertarianism of his Arizona constituents, and the reluctant tolerance of a deeply divided American public. He is anti-abortion but sheepishly so. He has met with gay Republican groups and supports the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.

For journalists, the most seductive aspect of the McCain candidacy may be not the constant access—or even the fact that, unlike most politicians, he actually seems to enjoy our company—but the startling, preëmptive willingness to plead guilty to almost any and all sins, personal or political, venial or mortal. It is a quality that made McCain's innocent plea in the F.C.C. case all the more convincing.

Travelling on the bus in New Hampshire one day, Joe Salkowski, of the Arizona *Daily Star*, pressed McCain after the candidate claimed, in response to a question from an NPR reporter, that he'd achieved more legislative results than any other member of the United States Senate—an unlikely statement from a candidate known for his almost histrionic humility.

"That was somewhat disingenuous on my part," McCain confessed immediately. "A lot of times, it was just that my name was on bills, some of them pretty nonsensical, that came out of the Commerce Committee," which McCain chairs.

A few days earlier, in South Carolina, I thought I'd caught the candidate in a contradiction: he was saying that the amount of money that has been siphoned from the Treasury in corporate-tax loopholes was approximately ten times the amount that is wasted in so-called pork-barrel spending programs, and yet he had voted for the Republican tax-cut bill in 1999, which was full of loopholes, and against the big appropriations bills (which, though porky, also contained money for much necessary government work).

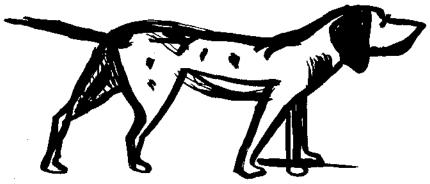
"Well, it was a shameless act of political hypocrisy," McCain shot back with a smile, "but I justified it by the faint hope that if we passed the tax-cut bill we might negotiate a reasonable compromise with the President. That didn't happen. I was wrong."

JUST before Christmas, John McCain and I took a commercial flight from New York to Boston, and we talked about some of the domestic-policy questions that haven't been part of his political portfolio in the Senate. McCain travelled with a single aide, and carried his own luggage; we sat in a rear row of the plane. We began with his frequent lamentation that young people are cynical about and alienated from government. I asked if there were other ways—aside from his usual prescription: campaign-finance reform, the cleansing of the system—to inspire them. He raised the notion of voluntarism, "the sort of thing that Colin Powell is encouraging around the country." But he soon drifted into a surprising confession. "I was wrong about AmeriCorps," he said of the President's signature service-for-scholarships program. "I was extremely skeptical at first, mostly because I didn't trust the authors. But I've got to say that, over all, the program's been a success. And it was a failure on my part not to recognize that earlier. So, if I'm elected President, I'll call in people like Colin Powell, and Reverend Floyd Flake in New York, and Eddie Edwards in Detroit, and ask them what works and what doesn't, and go with what does."

This was the first of many such answers. When asked about the current state of welfare reform, he admitted that he hadn't given much thought to the hard-core unemployables who soon may be left without benefits. ("Perhaps we could find some make-work jobs, sweeping out city hall or picking up trash—but we can't go back to the dependency cycle. They have to work.") Nor had he given much thought to the estimated thirty per cent of teen-age pregnancies that, according to some studies, may be the result of statutory rapes. ("I know this isn't much of an answer, but we have to improve foster care.") He thought Head Start was a "wonderful" program but opposed making preschool universal, as Al Gore has proposed: "People like me can afford nursery school."

He was boggled by health care. "This may sound like a cop-out," he said. "But give me five minutes and I can give you an answer to the Social Security problem, give me ten minutes and I can tell you how to reform the military, but I can't do that on health care. The complexities are intractable, the demographics—the problem of the aging baby-boom generation—are impossible. I think we're just going to have to do it on a piecemeal basis. Start with health care for children, and prescription drugs for those who can't afford them now. But problems like the middle-class people who declare bankruptcy in order to get their long-term care paid for by Medicaid—I just don't have an answer."

Health care isn't easy, but McCain is running for President. He had just released, with no small fanfare, a "plan," but it was almost laughably sketchy—with no real answers for the estimated forty-four million people without health insurance, many of whom work at low-wage jobs. (Even the accompanying "fact sheet" was filled with inaccuracies.) This sort of sloppiness seems particularly risky for a senator who likes to accuse the current Administration of running a "feckless, photo-op" foreign policy. In fact, McCain—who once said he wished that foreign policy were the "only" issue in the campaign—seems in danger of offering a Presidency similar to the last George Bush's: heavy on diplomacy, oblivious of the knotty domestic problems that ultimately determine the success or failure of most Administrations. "Nobody is going to elect us because we have the best health-care plan or tax cut," a McCain adviser says. "This race is about character."



But sharing the public's concerns, even those that aren't "fun," seems a significant quality in a potential President—and, after an hour's earnest-question barrage, McCain appeared to admit as much. "My greatest challenge now is going to be focussing on issues that I'm not familiar with," he said. "I've got to do a lot of studying, reading. I'm going to start meeting with experts the day after Christmas. It's human nature, with politicians as well as journalists, that we tend to go to those areas we feel comfortable with. My mission now is to go into the areas that are not my comfort zones."

It occurred to me that such an admission would be disastrous for any candidate playing by the traditional rules of politics, and particularly for McCain's primary opponent, George W. Bush, who offered detailed domestic- and foreign-policy speeches after a series of heavily publicized tutorials, with an impressive array of policy experts. (McCain's only official domestic-policy adviser is John Raidt, of the Senate Commerce Committee staff.) McCain's strategy seems the exact opposite of that employed by the last politician to capture the national fancy in a Presidential campaign: Bill Clinton answered every question, in overwhelming detail. He could silence even the most wonkified reporters, because he always knew more than they did. McCain is attempting something more charming—and, perhaps, authentic—but, ultimately, less responsible: he silences reporters by admitting that he doesn't know much at all.

The preëmptive confession of personal inadequacy seems a distinctive McCain behavior pattern. "I don't know where it comes from," says Mark Salter, a longtime staff member and the co-author of McCain's autobiography, "Faith of My Fathers." "But I suspect it's been there all his life. It's a very powerful impulse. He'll apologize for being a member of the Keating Five, even if you don't ask him about it. It drives the staff nuts."

Indeed, McCain's autobiography is filled with jaunty, if unsparing, confessions of personal shortcomings. Of Annapolis, where he finished fifth from the bottom of his class, he writes, "I spent the bulk of my free time being made an example of, marching many miles extra duty for poor grades, tardiness, messy quarters, slovenly appearance, sarcasm and multiple other violations of Academy standards."

And, "I must take most of the responsibility for my poor relationship with my company officer. . . . I was an arrogant, undisciplined, insolent midshipman. . . . In short, I acted like a jerk and gave [Captain] Hart good cause to despise me."

McCain even feels constrained to report the time he was so drunk that he fell through his date's screen door: "My unorthodox entry must have aroused her father's suspicions. . . . After little more than a quarter hour of their hospitality, he abruptly thanked me for paying them a visit and wished me a safe journey home."

But these embarrassments are mere preliminaries to what McCain considers the three great mistakes of his adult life: signing a prison confession that he was a war criminal, under considerable duress; his role in the Keating Five savings-and-loan scandal; and his responsibility for the dissolution of his first marriage, to Carol Shepp, after he returned home from Vietnam. His anguish over these is unrelenting; if elected President, he would be the most openly self-flagellating leader since Lincoln. "His whole family is like that," McCain's second wife, Cindy, says. "For me, being married to John has fabulous parts to it, and, well, I'm an extremely flawed person. But he admits to his flaws with such ease, and candor, and humility." She stopped and laughed. "I'm not nearly so good at it."

McCain's autobiography—which ends with his homecoming after the war—deals only with the first, and most excruciating, of his moral crises: the prison confession, which was coerced after a sustained period of torture. McCain was so shamed by his weakness during that ordeal that he twice attempted suicide—the first American politician, to my knowledge, to confess to such a thing—"feebly," he admits, by trying to hang himself in his cell. Eventually, his shame led to a certain nobility. When the war ended, McCain felt that his decision to sign the confession made it difficult for him to be publicly critical of the decisions made by others, notably those who opposed the war, during the Vietnam era.

THE ANCESTOR

The great-grandmother who bears down on us, as if beholding the mote
in our eye, from a nineteenth-century Hungarian portrait
on our library wall is no relation. Not even remote.
The straw-hatted man in a daguerreotype, though he and I may share the trait

of putting two fingers to the little carbuncle
on our right chin, is no more of my blood than I am
consanguineous with Cromwell. Our Webster's is inscribed "Philip. Best uncle."
Our napkins bear an unfamiliar monogram.

Yet how familiar all become. Shaving mug, gymkhana rosette, five charms
from a charm bracelet—all those heirlooms
to which we're now the heirs are at once more presentable and

more present than our own. This great-grandmother with folded arms
who lurches and looms
across the library may not be so unreasoning in her reprimand.

—Paul Muldoon

McCain's Keating Five obsession is more understandable than the shame he apparently still carries from his imprisonment, but he wasn't guilty of anything more serious than the appearance of impropriety in that case—and he arguably was a victim of excessive partisanship. Charles H. Keating, Jr., was the chairman of the Lincoln Savings & Loan Association, a friend and constituent who had contributed to McCain's campaigns. In 1987, he asked the Senator and four of his colleagues—John Glenn, Alan Cranston, Dennis DeConcini, and Donald Riegle, all Democrats—to intervene in a Federal Home Loan Bank Board investigation of American Continental Corporation, the corporate parent of Keating's Lincoln Savings & Loan Association (which eventually did go bankrupt, and forced a $2.6 billion federal bailout). McCain attended two meetings with federal regulators, but asked no special favors for Keating. Indeed, their friendship ended even before McCain attended the first meeting, when Keating called McCain a "wimp" for refusing to be aggressive in his defense.

From the start, McCain's involvement in the scandal appeared to be minimal—in fact, Robert S. Bennett, who served as special outside counsel in the investigation of the senators, suggested that McCain and John Glenn be dropped from the case. But the Democrats on the Ethics Committee refused to drop McCain or Glenn, for fear that it would then become a purely Democratic scandal.

The investigation lasted two years. McCain has said that it was more emotionally difficult, in some ways, than his time as a prisoner of war. "My honor was being called into question," he once told me. "There were days when I was so depressed I couldn't leave the house. I should never have even gone to those meetings. It gave the appearance of impropriety."

Cindy McCain, who had had back surgery and was battling a postoperative addiction to painkillers at the time, says, "I look back on those days as a kind of haze we both drifted through. There were days when neither of us wanted to leave the house—and I think the Keating situation is a large part of what drives John to this day. Having his honor questioned will live with him for the rest of his life. It has made him a better person, more thoughtful about how the things he says and does will affect other people, and more soft-spoken."

McCain's Senate colleagues, particularly the Republicans, tend to be less charitable. More than a few say that the Keating affair made an already self-righteous colleague into an impossible, and often obnoxiously explosive, prig. "Most of us think the campaign-finance stuff is just something he's doing to impress you guys in the press," one senator says. "But I've got to say there's something a little strange about the intensity of it. He was cleared. He didn't do anything wrong."

Even McCain's staff people, and some of his friends, wonder about the vehemence of his feelings. "I don't think this is about those two meetings with the regulators," says a longtime acquaintance from Arizona. "I think this is about his friendship with Charlie Keating, the trips he took down to Keating's Caribbean vacation house in Keating's private plane." (McCain eventually repaid Keating $13,433 for those flights.) "The thing is, everyone knew that Charlie Keating was a jerk. I don't know if John really was friendly with him, or just sucking up to him, but I think that's what he's really embarrassed about. It's something you wonder about with John. He fell for Duke Tully, too."

Tully was the publisher of the Arizona *Republic*, and claimed a spectacular, and utterly fictitious, military record as a fighter pilot—a fraud that was reported, in 1985, by his own newspaper. McCain refused to criticize Tully publicly after the scandal, but that friendship and the association with Keating seem part of a larger pattern: a congenital weakness for high and fast living, for shore-leave excesses and flyboy braggadocio. And that leads to the most

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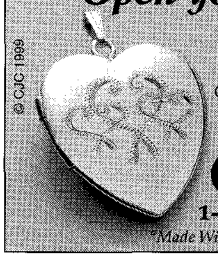

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sensitive of McCain's past mistakes: the dissolution of his first marriage.

“DID you ever meet Carol?” McCain asked suddenly, and rather fiercely, on our flight from New York to Boston. “You'd love her. She's a really terrific person. . . . I've lived a very, very flawed life. I don't think people would think so well of me if they knew more about that part of it.”

John McCain married Carol Shepp, a divorced mother of two, in 1965. A year later, he adopted her two children and Carol gave birth to a daughter, Sydney. The next year, McCain was shot down over Hanoi. In 1969, Carol was severely injured in an automobile accident and, over the next two years, endured twenty-three operations. In the process, she lost four inches of height and was confined to a wheelchair; by the time her husband returned home, in 1973, she had regained the ability to walk, but just barely. Neither John nor Carol McCain has ever talked in great detail about the difficulties of the next seven years, but it is safe to assume that McCain was a less than faithful husband. “The breakup of our marriage was not caused by my accident or Vietnam or any of those things,” Carol told Robert Timberg, McCain's biographer. “I attribute it more to John turning forty and wanting to be twenty-five again than I do to anything else.”

She is even less forthcoming now. “I love him to pieces,” the former Mrs. McCain told me. “I'm planning to vote for him. I don't have anything more to say.”

In the days before Christmas, several of the Senator's closest aides were nervous that some of the grisly details of McCain's private life would be revealed as the campaign intensified in January. It seemed likely that McCain would quickly acknowledge any and all peccadilloes, and, while it was difficult to believe that ancient history would have much impact on his campaign, the candidate clearly was concerned about the effect such stories would have on his reputation—and, especially, on his and Cindy's four children.

When, on the plane, McCain broached the subject of his first marriage, I wasn't sure how to react. In truth, I was embarrassed, and reflexively stopped taking notes. “There aren't many of us who haven't done things we're ashamed of over the past twenty-five years,” I said.

McCain shook his head and said, “Yeah, but . . .”

“Why are you so hard on yourself?” I asked, realizing that McCain's candor had accomplished a complete reversal of the traditional reportorial situation. Usually, the implicit question is directed the other way, from politician to journalist: “Why are you being so hard on me?”

As I recall, the candidate didn't have an answer to my question. The plane was descending into Boston. A stewardess came back: the captain wanted the candidate's autograph.

ON the day that the Boston *Globe* first reported the story of McCain's effort to speed the F.C.C. decision in Pittsburgh, McCain was back on his bus, surrounded by journalists, pretending to enjoy the ride. That evening, he was grilled by Ted Koppel on “Nightline” and seemed even more awkward and truncated than usual, his eyes darting nervously, a determined smile attached to his face like a Post-it note, as he insisted he had just been doing his job as chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee.

It occurred to me that McCain is far more comfortable admitting guilt than professing innocence. On the bus that day, he was confronted by a reporter who wanted to know about a fact sheet the McCain campaign had just released, which was headlined “McCain's Mature Vision for America's Future v. Bush's Political Plan for the 2000 Election.”

Didn't that language violate McCain's pledge not to do any negative campaigning? The question was asked—humorously, it seemed—by a reporter who may have been mocking the goody-goodiness of the campaign. The language of the fact sheet was hardly noxious, but McCain responded with a straight face. “Yeah,” he agreed, finding solace, as always, in the mortification of the flesh. “We probably do deserve some static for that. It was a cheap shot.”

And then, noticing the groans and winces from his staff, he quickly added, “Well, maybe not a cheap shot—just the wrong thing to do.” ♦

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TOTALLY AMAZING GRACE

BY PAUL RUDNICK

PEOPLE magazine recently interviewed country/pop star LeAnn Rimes about her special audience with Pope John Paul II.

"Well, I got there two minutes before he walked in. Thank God he was late. He came in [and] gave a whole speech which was in, I think, Latin. . . . It was really cool."—LeAnn in *People.*

Here now, an E-mail response from His Holiness:

P.J.P. II: Well, of course I was late—I was so nervous! Sure, I'm the infallible voice of God on Earth, but LeAnn's only, what—twelve? And she's gone multi-platinum, with crossover into the pop audience, plus she recently lost twenty pounds with a martial-arts workout. I told Cardinal Benselmo, I can't meet LeAnn Rimes, I'll die, I'll faint, what'll I wear? But then there she was, so beyond adorable, and I got so excited I just started babbling, and she was so sweet, she said something really nice in, I think, English, and it sounded like, "Neat to meetcha, Your Grace. Tell God I say howdy." And then she tweaked my Papal beanie, winked, and said, "Hey, what gives—ya Jewish?"

"I'm a strong Christian, and to meet someone like him, it touched me a lot, it really did, getting blessed by him."—LeAnn in *People.*

P.J.P. II: I am *such* a fan, especially of country/pop, because it's less twangy—LeAnn and Shania are my faves, because they're country, but not too Opry. I like country with a midriff. An audience with LeAnn was like meeting Dolly or Reba or even Della Reese from "Touched by an Angel"—*love* that show! Whenever the angels deliver the big message, their hair gets this special golden backlit glow, to show that the word of God is not only sacred but a fabulous conditioner. Are you listening, Celine?

"I just wish I was able to understand what he was saying. It was such a moving moment. I almost started crying." —LeAnn in *People.*

P.J.P. II: I kept telling her, over and over, that her version of "How Do I Live" beat the *socks* off Trisha Yearwood's, even if Trisha got the Grammy. I kept saying, We researched it in the Vatican archives, and "Trisha" is definitely an ancient Coptic term meaning "prom date of Lucifer." I asked LeAnn, Please, is there anyone you want sent to Hell, an ex-manager, maybe Britney Spears, but I don't know if I got through. I mimed Britney's schoolgirl/vixen shimmy from the video where she sings, "Hit me, baby, one more time," but I don't know if it was clear. Help!

"He's Catholic. It's what he dreamed of his whole life."—LeAnn in *People,* on her bodyguard, whom she brought with her to the Vatican.

P.J.P. II: Cardinal Benselmo begged me to introduce him to LeAnn. He said, You totally owe me, I voted for you. He *worships* LeAnn, he has a tape of her at eight years old on "Star Search"—he says that even then she was da bomb. I said, O.K., but don't gush, just treat her like a person, and so of course he starts speaking in tongues and pleading for an autograph, claiming it's for some abbess from Lake Como. I said, Please, Giancarlo, you are *so embarrassing* me! Why don't you just go say, like, eight thousand Hail Marys and prostrate yourself, but he wouldn't stop, he shoves a pen and his LeAnn Christmas CD at her and says, Please sign it "To My Very Favorite Servant of the Lord, XXX, 000, You're Next!" As if!

"I'm Baptist. I didn't quite get the whole feeling, but I totally respect [the Catholic] religion, and it was still really amazing."—LeAnn in *People.*

P.J.P. II: LeAnn was just so poised and fun and thin—the baby fat is totally gone, it's just like I told Courtney Cox, it's very pious to give up carbs for Lent. I wanted to tell LeAnn that she has a major career ahead of her in both features and holiday specials involving duets with Clint Black, but then I thought, in the words of Our Saviour, *Duh.* When she smiled, the whole apse just lit up, she was like Mother Teresa, only, how can I put this, less infinitely careworn and radiant with inner grace, but technically way cuter. Her eyes just got all crinkly in that majorly sunshiny way, and for that second all I could think was O.K., maybe the Church could have done more to help out in the Second World War, but LeAnn *rocks.* Cardinal Benselmo was still grabbing my elbow, going, Ask her about Ricky Martin, but she was already on her way out, and I heard her murmur something to her bodyguard about where could she find "some fries and a Moon Pie in this town" and about how Italy seems "much bigger than it looks at Epcot." And then I had to get back to work, doing Pope stuff, you know, blessing key chains and Kennedy annulments, but from that day on I knew, I just totally knew, there *is* a God. ♦

ISTVAN BANYAI

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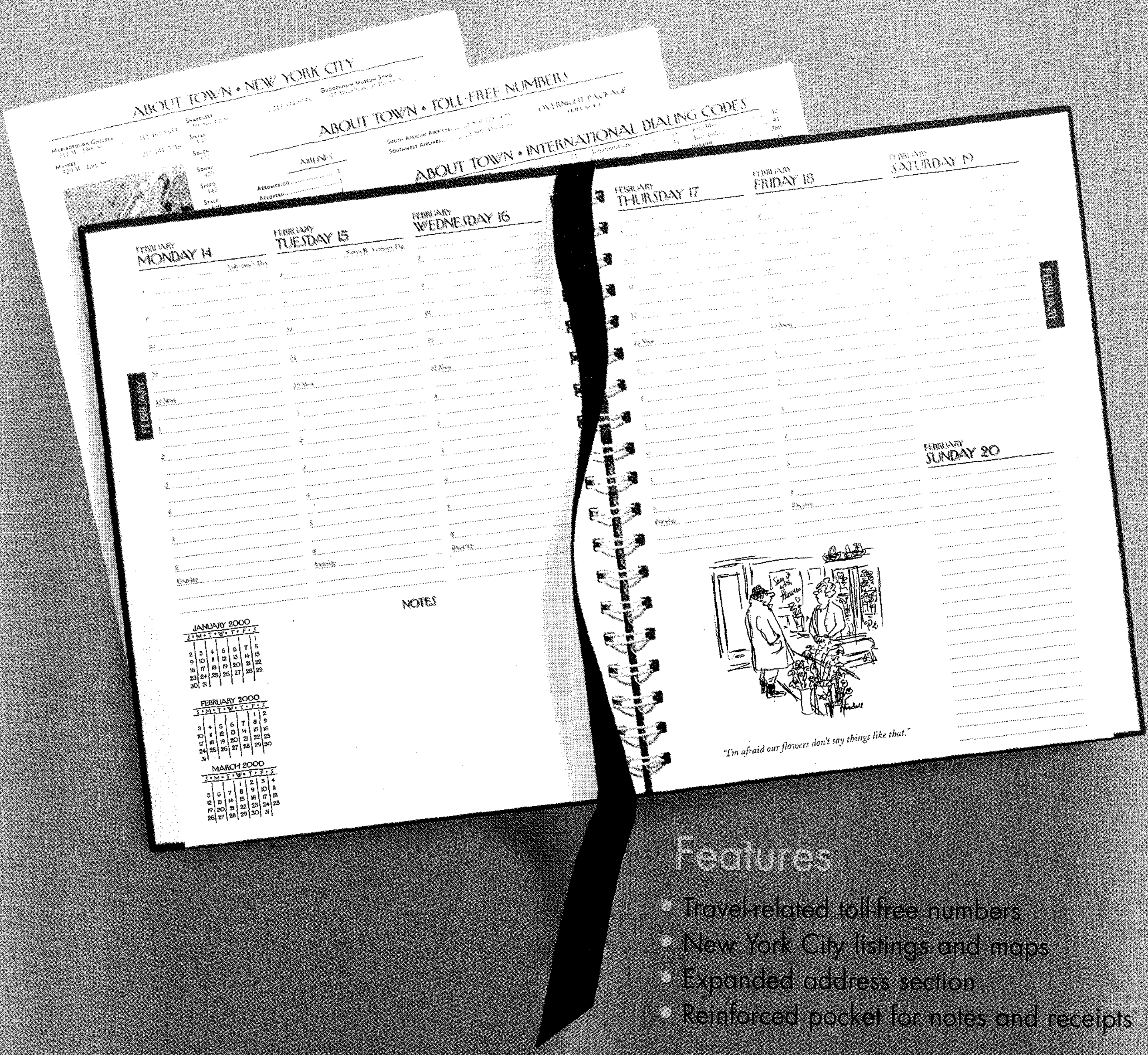
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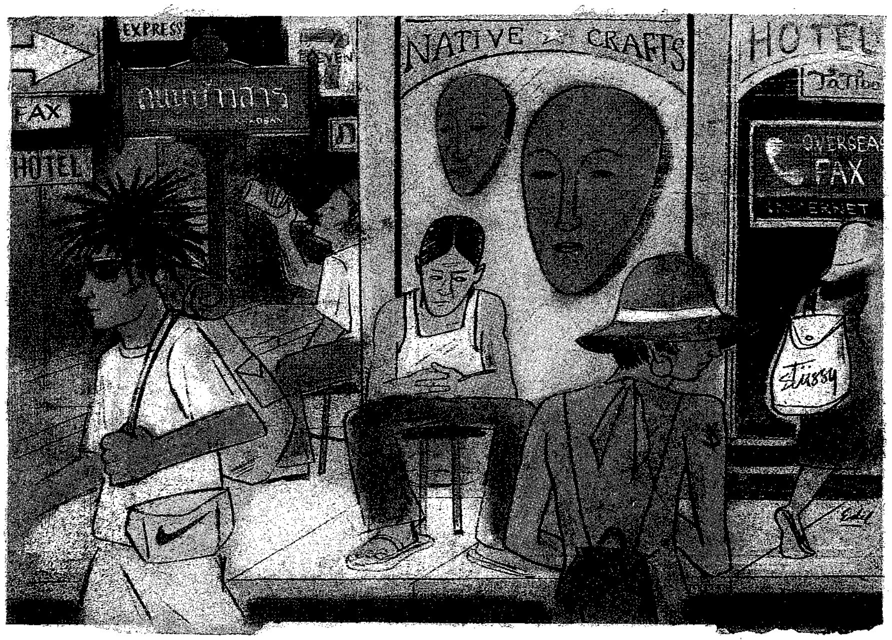
LETTER FROM BANGKOK

THE PLACE TO DISAPPEAR

Why so many people wind up on Khao San Road.

BY SUSAN ORLEAN



EDEL RODRIGUEZ

ALL languages are welcome on Bangkok's Khao San Road, including Drunkard. "Hold my hand," a man fluent in Singapore Slings commanded a Scottish hairdresser one night at Lucky Beer and Guest House—only in his dialect it came out soggy and rounded, more like *Hole mah han.*

"Not right now," the Scottish hairdresser said. She was a slender girl with the pinkish pallor of a milkmaid, blond hair, gray eyes, and a nose ring. She was on a six-week trip through Asia with two cute friends from Glasgow. They'd just arrived on a super-discount flight from Scotland and had checked into a seven-dollar-a-night room at one of the several hundred or so cheap guesthouses around Khao San Road—Happy Home Guest House or Nirvana Café and Guest House or Sweety's or Lek Mam's or something; they actually couldn't remember what it was called, but they knew how to find their way back. They also knew how to get from their guesthouse to the new branch of Boots, the English drugstore, which opened recently amid the T-shirt shops and travel agencies that line Khao San. Within their first few hours in Bangkok, the girls went to Boots and blew their travel budget on English soap and shampoo—same soap and shampoo they could get at home but somehow more exotic-seeming when bought in Thailand—and on snack packages of Oreos, which they worship and which are not easy to find in the United Kingdom. They thought Khao San was horrible because it was so crowded and loud and the room in the guesthouse was so dingy, but it was brilliant, too, because it was so inexpensive, and there were free movies playing at all the bars, and because they'd already run into two friends from home. On top of that, finding a branch of Boots right here was almost too good to be true. What's more, Boots was super-air-conditioned, and that distinguished it from many of the other Khao San Road shops, which were open to the hot and heavy Bangkok air. Now it was close to midnight, and the girls were sitting at a rattletrap table outside Lucky Beer, eating noodles and drinking Foster's Lager and trying to figure out how to get to Laos.

"Hole mah han," the drunk repeated, and thrust his arm across the table. The

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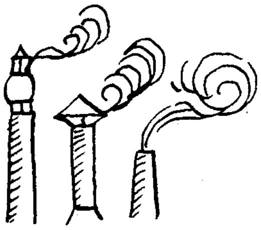
three girls studied his arm, then shifted away from him. "Wow," one of the hairdresser's friends said. "He looks kind of . . . *old.*"

"Shut up," the man snapped. He yanked his arm back, wobbled to his feet, and then fell across the table, sending a saltshaker and a napkin dispenser to heaven. All the while, the girls kept talking about their schedule. It was as if the strangeness of where they were and what they were doing were absolutely ordinary: as if there were no large, smelly drunk sprawled in front of them, as if it were quite unexceptional to be three Scottish girls drinking Australian beer in Thailand on their way to Laos, and as if the world were the size of a peanut—something as compact as that, something that easy to pick up, shell, consume, as long as you were young and sturdy and brave. If you spend any time on Khao San Road, you will come to believe that this is true. Finally, the hairdresser glanced at the man, who had not moved. "Hello, sir?" she said, leaning toward his ear. "Hello? Can you hear me? Can I ask you something important? Do you remember where you're from?"



I went back to Lucky Beer the next night, but the Scottish girls were gone—off to Laos, most likely. At their table was a South African woman who taught English in Taiwan and was on her way back from massage school in Chiang Mai, in northern Thailand. The next night, she was gone, too, replaced by an American couple in their twenties who'd just finished a Peace Corps assignment in Lithuania and were taking the long way home; the night after that, it was five Israelis who had just finished their military service and were stalling in Southeast Asia before starting college in Tel Aviv.

Khao San Road, one long packed block in Bangkok's Banglamphu neighborhood, was the jumping-off point for all of them, a sort of non-place they went to in order to leave from, so they could get to the place they really wanted to go. People appear on Khao San just long enough to disappear. It is, to quote the Khao San Road Business Association's motto, "Gateway to Southeast Asia," provided that you are travelling on the cheap and have a backpack fused to your shoulders. From here you can embark on Welcome Travel's escorted tour of Chiang Mai, which guarantees contact with four different hill tribes, or the Cheap and Smile Tour to Koh Samui, or a minibus trip to Phuket or Penang or Kota Baharu, or an overland journey by open-bed pickup truck to Phnom Penh or Saigon, or a trip via some rough conveyance to India or Indonesia or Nepal or Tibet or Myanmar or anywhere you can think of—or couldn't think of, probably, until you saw it named on a travel-agency kiosk on Khao San Road and decided *that* was the place you needed to see. Everything you need to stay afloat for months of travelling—tickets, visas, laundry, guidebooks, American movies, Internet access, phone service, luggage storage—is available on Khao San Road.

Thailand, the most pliant of places, has always accommodated even the rudest of visitors. For hundreds of years, it was the junction between Chinese, Burmese, Indian, Khmer, and Vietnamese traders. Many Americans first came to know Bangkok as the comfort lounge for troops in Vietnam, and, later, as the capital of sex tourism. Starting in the early eighties, when foreigners started trekking to such places as Myanmar and Tibet and Vietnam, Thailand took on another hostessing job, because Bangkok was the safest, easiest, most Westernized place from which to launch a trip through Asia. Until then, Khao San was an unremarkable working-class neighborhood. It had a large temple called Wat Chanasongkhran, a small Muslim enclave, bakeries, motorcycle shops, grocery stores, and a surprising number of residents who were employed as traditional Thai dancers. There were some hotels in the neighborhood, frequented by Thai businesspeople. In 1985, Bonny and Anek Rakisaraseree noticed how many budget travellers—mostly young French and Australian men—were drifting around Bangkok, so they opened Bonny Guest House, the first on Khao San catering to foreign wanderers. Locals were not even permitted to rent rooms. Dozens of other guesthouses opened soon afterward, most with forbidding signs in the lobby saying "Not allow any Thais to go upstairs." Drugs were fantastically cheap and available and quietly tolerated, despite wishful signs saying "We do not welcome use or possession of heroin in guesthouse."

More than a third of Thailand's seven million annual visitors are young, and undoubtedly many of them pass some time on Khao San. Some are Americans, but even more of them are from other countries: Australians having what they call their "o-s experience," their overseas experience, which begins in Sydney and ends six or eight months later with requisite "Rough Guide" and "Lonely Planet"-advised stops in Goa for Christmas and in Nepal for a winter trek and in Angkor Wat for sunrise; hordes of Israelis, fresh out of the Army—so many, in fact, that the best kosher food and the only Hebrew bookstore in Thailand are on Khao San Road. There are such large crowds of Japanese kids that a few guesthouses are de-facto Japanese only, and you can buy a logo T-shirt of any Japanese baseball team from the venders on the road. There are French and German and British and Canadians. Altogether, they have turned Khao San into a new sort of place—not really Thai anymore, barely Asian, overwhelmingly young, palpably transient, and anchored in the world by the Internet, where there is no actual time and no actual location. Khao San has the best foreign bookstores in Thailand, thanks to the books that backpackers sell before heading home, and it probably has the fewest prostitutes in Bangkok, partly because the guesthouses frown on overnight Thai guests, and partly because, one backpacker explained to me, most of the travellers would rather have sex with each other than with someone for hire. Khao San is now the travel hub for half the world, a place that prospers on the desire to be someplace else. The cheapest tickets on the most hair-raising of airlines can be bought in the scores of bucket shops that have collected in the neighborhood. Airlines you've never heard of, flying routes you never imagined, for prices you only dream of are the staple of Khao San travel agencies. The first time I ever heard of Khao San Road was from an American backpacker whom I met on a Bhutanese airline flight from Calcutta to Bangkok. He'd bought his ticket on Khao San Road. "I told the travel agent I didn't care how or when I got there," he said. "As long as it was cheap, I was ready to go."

I have a persistent fantasy that involves Khao San. In it, a middle-aged middlebrow middle manager from Phoenix is deposited at the western end of the road, near the Chanasongkhran police booth. He is a shocking sight, dressed in a blue business suit and a red tie and a white Oxford shirt, carrying a Hartmann briefcase, and wearing a Timex. He wanders through the snarl of peddlers' carts and trinket booths. First, he discards his suit for batik drawstring trousers and a hemp vest and a Che Guevara T-shirt, or knock-off Timberland cargo shorts and a Japanimation tank top, and he sells his Timex to a guy with a sign that says "We buy something/camera/tent/sleeping bag/walkman/backpack/Swiss knife." He then gets a leather thong bracelet for one wrist and a silver cuff for the other, stops at Golden Lotus Tattoo for a few Chinese characters on his shoulder, gets his eyebrow pierced at Herbal House Healthy Center, has blond extensions braided into his hair, trades his briefcase for a Stüssy backpack and a Hmong fabric waistpack, watches twenty minutes of "The Phantom Menace" or "The Blair Witch Project" at Buddy Beer, goes into Hello Internet Café and registers as "zenmasterbob" on hotmail.com, falls in love with a Norwegian aromatherapist he meets in the communal shower at Joe Guest House, takes off with her on a trek through East Timor, and is never seen again.

The sidewalk venders changed a little every day I was on Khao San. The road has a jumble of small businesses—travel agencies, Internet cafés, souvenir stores, bars—and the sidewalk and the edge of the roadbed are lined with stalls offering bootleg tapes, bogus Teva sandals, Hindu-print camisoles, and flyweight silver jewelry, along with the hair-braiders and the banana-pancake makers. A few spots had more transient occupants, and, except for the daily twitches in the exchange rate at Khao San's foreign-currency shops, they were one of the only things that distinguished one day from the next. The morning I arrived on Khao San, a nerdy Thai teen-ager had got a foothold halfway down one block, between Shaman Bookstore and Nadav Bead Shop, and was peddling electronic pagers. The next day, he was gone, and a chatty young woman was there selling handmade burlap handbags. I began to think of the days that way—as "burlap-bag day" or "pager day"—to help tell them apart. One morning—it was miniature-mirrored-disco-ball day—I stopped to check my E-mail at Khao-San Cyber Home, a computer center set a few paces back from the sidewalk beside a stand of banana trees and a fishpond full of carp. On the street, the open-air Siam Oriental Inn was blasting a Swedish-dubbed version of "The Phantom Menace" on wide-screen TV, while across the way Buddy Beer, also open-air and also maximum volume, was showing "Wild Wild West," and at the big bootleg-cassette booth next door an early Santana album screeched out of tinny speakers. The sounds collided like a car wreck, and even early in the day the wet, warm air smelled like Michelob and pad thai.

Inside the Khao-San Cyber Home, though, it was mercifully cool and quiet. In the front room were eight computer terminals with Pentium II microprocessors, a large and solemn photograph of King Bhumibol Adulyadej on one wall, and a Buddhist altar in the corner across from the front door. I left my shoes by the landing and padded across the floor to an open computer. On my left, a thin kid with a blond braid was instant-messaging someone in Australia. On my right, two girls were squeezed together at one terminal, tapping out a message in romanized Japanese. The more slowly and more uncomfortably and more dangerously you travel around Asia, the more rank you pull in backpacker culture—in other words, it's much cooler to go somewhere by cargo boat or pickup truck or milk train than to fly—but when it comes to computers Khao San is all speed. The first Macintosh computers in all of Thailand appeared here, and one Internet-service

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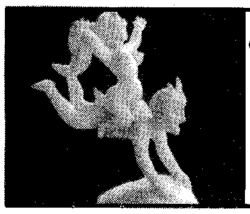

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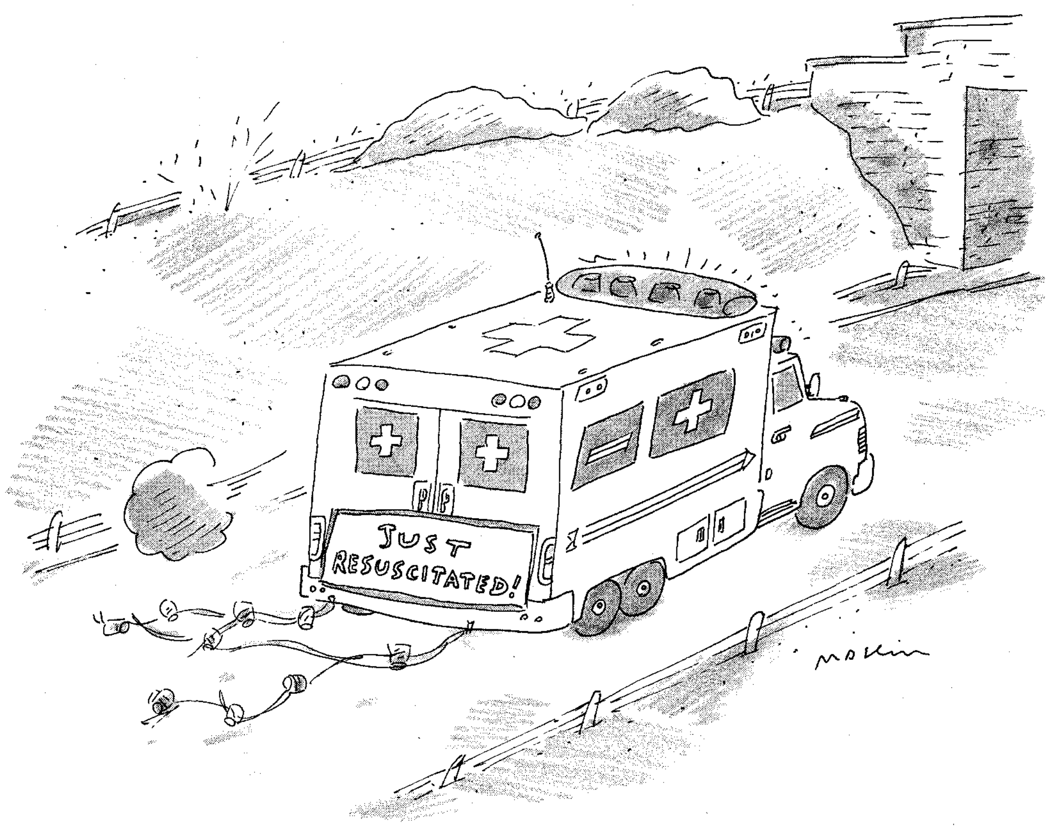
owner complained sourly to me that backpackers refused to use anything with Pentium I microprocessors anymore, so he had to upgrade all his machines to Pentium IIIs.

There are so many Internet outlets on Khao San Road now that the price to use a computer is probably the best in the world, and certainly the best in Asia—around three cents a minute, compared with, say, five dollars a minute, which is what I paid to check my E-mail in Cambodia. In the past, a six-month odyssey through the Far East might have meant a few letters home and the rare long-distance phone call; now it's possible for a few cents to E-mail friends and family every day, order clothes from the Gap, and even read your local newspaper on-line. Some computer centers on Khao San stay open twenty-four hours a day. Hello Internet Café was the first in the neighborhood. Khao-San Cyber Home is one of the most recent. Until eight months ago, it wasn't a cyber home at all: it was an actual home of an actual Thai family, the Boonpojanasoontorns, who had been living on Khao San for many years. Until Chanin Boonpojanasoontorn learned about the Internet when he was at college and pushed the family to capitalize on their location, Khao-San Cyber Home computer center had been the family's living room.

Urasa Boonpojanasoontorn, the second youngest daughter, was behind the desk that day, and from time to time her father toddled by on some household task and then disappeared behind a door again. Urasa is twenty-five and has a round face and a square body and a quick, crumpled-up smile. She was wearing a white polo shirt and pleated khakis—nearly a nun's outfit on Khao San Road, where the skimpiest camisoles and the filmiest skirts are the usual backpacker gear. Urasa and her brother and sisters grew up playing soccer in the middle of the street with the other neighborhood kids, buying candy at the stores that back then stocked everyday groceries and household goods. "When I was in seventh grade," Urasa said to me, "I went outside and everything was different. The foreigners had arrived. It happened so fast! It was such a quiet place before. There were no foreigners. It changed, like, overnight, and I never went outside again." Her parents were afraid of the backpackers. Once the neighborhood changed, they insisted that the kids come home directly from school and stay away from the street. I asked her what they were afraid of. "They thought the backpackers had a different life style than us," she said, carefully. "Their language and their behavior were different. There were boys and girls travelling together, and the problem of drugs. And when I first saw the way the backpackers dressed . . ." She hesitated. The door behind her desk opened, and I could see her father in an easy chair, watching TV. "The way the backpackers dressed was shocking. My father and mom thought it wasn't good. I can't say what happens in other countries, but if I saw a Thai girl dressed like that I would think it wasn't good." She brightened and added, "Sometimes it was fun to hear the music from the bars. It wasn't sad when it changed. There was no more playing in the street, but then I grew up and I had other things to do. I studied hard. It's different from your culture. I had a tutor for two hours every day after school and on Saturday, too."

The front door opened and three Israeli girls in pastel tank tops came in to use Khao-San Cyber Home's international long-distance service. They took their shoes off and left them by the door, a Thai tradition that most shops on Khao San forgo. Urasa decided to uphold it because she wanted her customers to see a little bit of her culture, her life style, even though it meant that some backpackers in twenty-four-eyelet hiking boots chose to check their E-mail somewhere more lenient. A similar impulse accounts for the Buddhist altar and the King's portrait, though not for the enormous framed Michael Jordan poster beside her desk. "He's mine," Urasa said, tapping the glass above Jordan's eye. "I never heard about him until my sister went to college in Illinois, and she said to me, 'Urasa, you have to see this man. He is a *god*.' "


JUST RESUSCITATED!

SOMETHING about Khao San Road makes you feel as though it could eat you alive. The junkies and the glue-sniffers lurking in the alleys are part of it, and so are the clean-cut kids with stiff, Ecstasy-fuelled grins dancing at the cafés; the aimlessness that pervades the place is both pleasantly spacey and a little scary when you glimpse an especially blank face. Travellers do vanish in all sorts of ways. The first cyber-café I stopped in had a ten-thousand-dollar-reward sign on the wall which said, "Have you seen my son? He was backpacking around India and was last heard from in May 1997 from Northern India." Urasa said she sees a lot of lost souls. One day, an American girl came into Khao-San Cyber Home to call her mother and could hardly talk because she was crying so hard. "She had lost her boyfriend," Urasa told me. "He disappeared from her in Nepal." Sometimes, visitors planning another kind of trip are busted and subsequently relocated to Bangkok's Ban Kwan Prison. Guesthouses often post lists of foreigners who are locked up on drug charges, and encourage you to visit Lyle Doniger, of Australia, or Alan Jon Davies, of Britain, or any number of Americans and Danes and Italians at Ban Kwan if you find yourself with nothing to do one afternoon.

The day begins at night on Khan San Road. Usually a soccer game is being broadcast from one bar and five or six movies are being broadcast from the others, and the cassette dealers are demonstrating the quality of their bootleg tapes by playing Global Trance Mission or Techno Trance Mania or Earth, Wind and Fire at top volume. Kids clutching copies of "Bangkok Groovy Map & Guide" and "Teach Yourself Indonesian" and "Teach Yourself Card Games for 1" and the "Swahili Phrasebook" amble up and down the street. They emerge from the guesthouses—and their bottom-dollar rooms, with wafer-thin walls and battered mattresses—to collect in the cafés for ten-cent plates of curry chicken and "Stogarnov Steak" and beer and to shop. The first Thai head of state to travel outside the region was King Rama V, who visited Europe in 1897. He brought back Waterford crystal from Ireland, Sèvres porcelain and Baccarat goblets from France, Murano glass from Italy, Royal Crown Derby plates from England. When you visit Khao San Road, you can bring back Indian undershirts decorated with Hindu imagery, Australian Billabong sweats, Nike jackets made in Indonesia, rubber-platform faux-fur thongs from another planet, Game Boys from Japan, and a used copy of "Memoirs of a Geisha" that was published in England and sold to a secondhand bookstore in Bangkok by a New Zealander on his way to Vietnam.

Around midnight, I ran into the South African English teacher from Taiwan who had been on her way back from massage school in northern Thailand the other time I'd met her. Seeing her again was both a shock and not a shock, because Khao San is so transitory a place that you imagine each encounter there to be singular, but then you realize that the world is small and this particular world of young adventurers is smaller yet, and that there is nothing extraordinary about seeing the same people, because their great adventures tend to take them to the same few places over and over again. Her name was Elizabeth, and she and I stopped at a street vender and bought corn on the cob and sat on a curb near My House Guest House to eat. This time she'd just come back from a full-moon party on the southern Thai island of Koh Phangan, a party of two thousand travellers, most of them high on Ecstasy or pot or psychedelics, painting a herd of oxen with Day-Glo colors and dancing for hours on the edge of the sea. She now had a terrible headache, but she didn't think it was from the drugs or the late hours. She blamed a Sikh psychic she'd met that morning on Khao San who had tricked her into paying him a hundred dollars so he wouldn't curse her karma. I felt sorry for her, so I treated her to a bowl of noodle soup from a stand at the western end of the street. We were, at that moment, on the very edge of the rest of the city. Thirty paces away, on Chakrabongse Road, were a dozen bridal shops where Thai girls shopped for their big white gowns; a few paces beyond that was the temple, Wat Chanasongkhran, where monks in yellow were chanting their daily sutras. All of it seemed surreal and sort of irrelevant and much farther away from Khao San Road than almost anywhere else in the universe, including outer space. Elizabeth had a travel tip for me. "The Phantom Menace" was starting at 1 A.M. at Buddy Beer, and if she finished her soup, and we hurried, we could make it back for the opening scene. ♦

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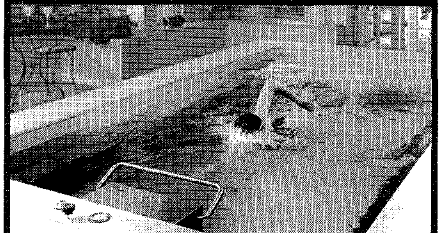
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ANNALS OF JUSTICE

DNA ON TRIAL

The test is irrefutable, so why doesn't it always work?

BY PETER J. BOYER

MAGNUM

EACH year, volunteers from the second- and third-year classes at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, in lower Manhattan, are selected to participate in a program called the Innocence Project, whose mission is to exonerate, through DNA testing, people who have been wrongly convicted of crimes. For the students, there is much effort and no pay, but there is invaluable real-life instruction on the workings—and the failings—of the criminal-justice system. The project, which was inaugurated in the early nineteen-nineties, has played a role in thirty-nine exonerations, and after every triumph the students deconstruct the case to show where the system failed. Last summer, their efforts produced what the project considers a prize study in miscarried justice: the case of Calvin C. Johnson, Jr.

Johnson, who spent nearly sixteen years in Georgia's state prisons, where he was serving a life sentence for rape, aggravated sodomy, and burglary, gained his freedom in June. Although DNA exonerations are hardly uncommon anymore, Johnson's story became national news, because it seemed the perfect allegory for the native Southern iniquity regarding race: Johnson is black, his accuser is white, and he was convicted by an all-white jury that reached its verdict in less than an hour. (The *Times*, for instance, saw in the case "the racial underpinnings of so many convictions in Georgia and the rest of the Deep South.")

On the day of his release, Johnson stood in the courthouse where he had been sentenced to prison and accepted a handshake from the man who had sent him there, Clayton County District Attorney Robert Keller. It was a satisfying scene, duly noted by the press, but Keller continued to believe that Johnson's prosecution and conviction had been entirely warranted. This view was shared by other law-enforcement officials, including Paul Howard, who had prosecuted Johnson in an earlier case, and Carole Wall, another of Johnson's prosecutors, who says of him, "I really do think that he's a serial rapist."

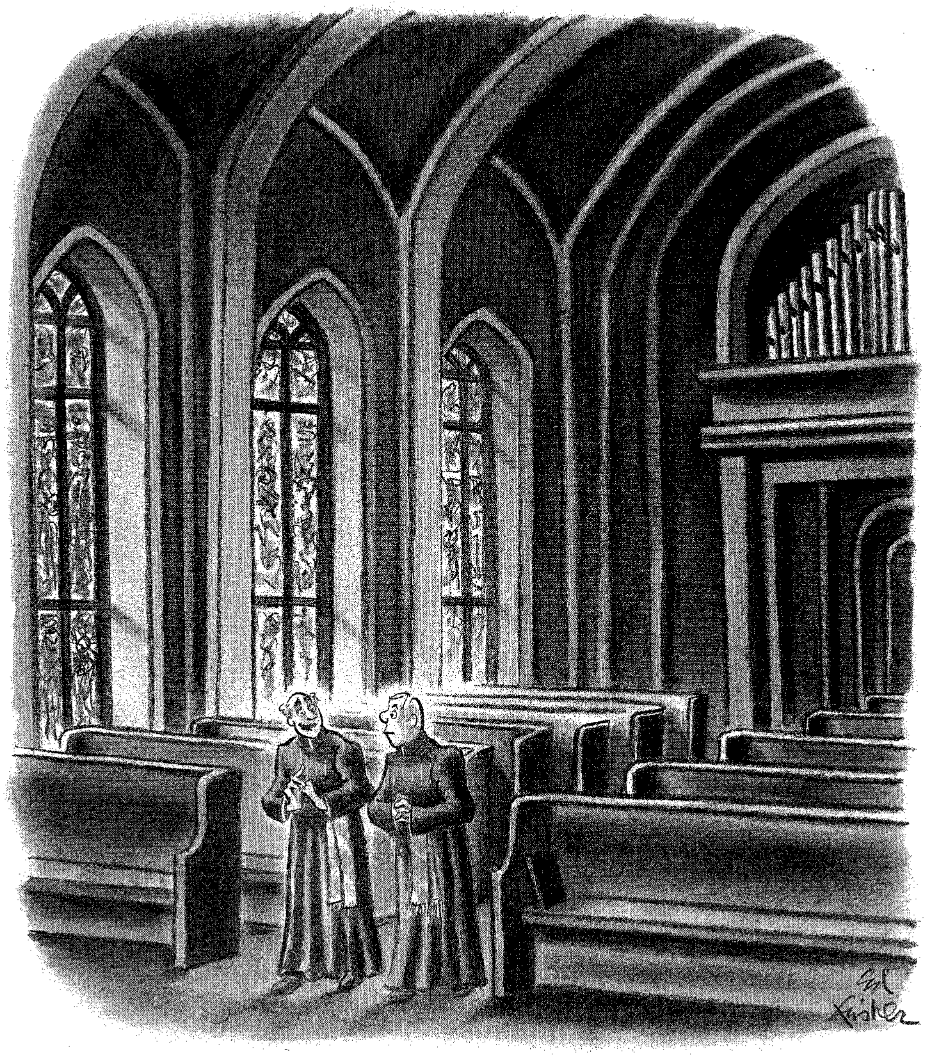
Keller had considered fighting Johnson's exoneration bid, but the prospect of taking on the Innocence Project was daunting. The project is run by the noted defense lawyers Barry Scheck and Peter Neufeld, who became national figures after their work in behalf of O. J. Simpson's defense team, and the Johnson case, with its racial dynamics, had the potential for political calamity. Also, there was the DNA. The science that exonerated Calvin Johnson is the marvel of forensics, and the Innocence Project's DNA expert, a forensic scientist named Edward Blake, is recognized as one of the world's best—so highly regarded that Keller's own forensics experts didn't even think it necessary to verify his findings. In the end, Keller assented and Johnson was freed.

At the Innocence Project, Calvin Johnson's case was supervised by Peter Neufeld, who viewed it as a grave injustice wrought by a flawed system—"a fabulous model for the lingering legacy of slavery," as he puts it. Neufeld, who is forty-nine, became a lawyer because he saw the law as a means to effect social change, and he is proud of his professional fidelity to his social conscience. After graduating from New York University School of Law, Neufeld went to work in the Legal Aid office in the South Bronx, where he met another earnest young lawyer on a social mission, Barry Scheck. Neufeld and Scheck became accomplished defense lawyers and colleagues as well, developing a particular interest in what Neufeld calls the "intersection between science and the law"—that is, forensics. Neufeld did pioneering work in forensic psychology; he was one of the first lawyers to successfully use "battered woman's syndrome" as a defense against murder. He chose cases according to a strict political code, refusing, for example, to represent accused rapists who claimed in their defense that the victims had consented to sex, even if he believed them to be innocent, because "I didn't want to be part of the process of trying to lobby jurors to develop a different approach toward the politics of sex."

Inevitably, Neufeld and Scheck were drawn to the new technology of DNA "fingerprinting," recognizing in it a powerful tool for exonerating people who had been wrongly convicted and imprisoned. In its probative value, it was such a monumental leap beyond conventional serology, or blood typing, that the two men imagined nothing less than a transformation of the criminal-justice system. To Neufeld, DNA identification is "the gold standard of innocence." Scheck has called it a "magical black box that suddenly produces the truth."

The lawyers found that applying DNA testing to long-settled criminal cases was a tricky business, though, because the evidence was fragile and old; in many instances, it no longer existed. But they went to work, with the help of students at Cardozo, where Scheck is a professor and Neufeld teaches part

Peter Neufeld and Barry Scheck, above, believed that DNA "fingerprinting" would transform the criminal-justice system. They saw in the case of Calvin Johnson, opposite, a prize study of miscarried justice. Photographs by Gilles Peress.



"It seems to me that ordination of women might brighten the place up a bit."

time, and began to win exonerations, based on the mesmerizing power of DNA proof. Word of the Innocence Project's work spread, creating a flash fire of hope, and soon the project had a pile of requests several hundred cases high. The lawyers were selective—biological material had to be available, and the defense had to have been that the accused had been wrongly identified by the victim. (Seventy per cent of the project's cases are dropped, because the evidence has been lost or destroyed.)

By the time Neufeld agreed to take on Calvin Johnson's case, some sixty men in America had been exonerated and freed from prison through DNA testing. "We think there'll be hundreds and hundreds exonerated in the next few years," Neufeld says.

The Innocence Project, however, is not what made Peter Neufeld a nationally famous lawyer. What accomplished that, to his chagrin, was his role on the "dream team" of lawyers who successfully defended O. J. Simpson against the charge that he murdered his ex-wife, Nicole, and her friend Ron Goldman. Neufeld, an affable New Yorker, grows visibly taut at the mention of the Simpson case, and he will ask a reporter not to mention this "matter that was litigated in the Los Angeles Superior Court." In his office, the only obvious reminder of the case is a mock Oscar on a bookshelf bearing the inscription "To the Simpson Defense Team"—a gift from an admirer in Los Angeles.

And yet the Simpson case is surely relevant to the matter of DNA as the "gold standard" of innocence or guilt. In the criminal trial, the prosecution presented a trove of credible DNA evidence—blood in Simpson's Bronco, on his socks, on the fence outside Nicole Brown Simpson's house, among other things—that connected Simpson to the crime. Neufeld and Scheck's job in the Simpson defense was to attack the DNA presentation, and, by employing their own fluency in DNA forensics, they reduced the prosecution's DNA case to one of practical irrelevance. Because the actual science of the DNA identification was unassailable, Scheck and Neufeld attacked the procedures used to collect and store the evidence, challenged the competency of the forensic specialists who handled it, and nourished the idea (however dubious) that the case against Simpson was the result of a frameup by the Los Angeles Police Department.

Their efforts were central to, and perhaps even decisive in, Simpson's acquittal, but there was a larger result, too: if the DNA evidence in the Simpson case was not enough to compel a corresponding verdict, then DNA could not be a "gold standard of innocence." Scheck and Neufeld demonstrated that in the hands of skillful lawyers operating in the adversarial context of a courtroom DNA becomes just another piece of evidence.

As it happened, the case of Calvin Johnson was not a simple matter of remedying old prejudices with new science. Georgia law-enforcement officials felt that they had good reasons for arresting Johnson, and the jury that convicted him likewise felt that it had good reasons for doing so. Although it was DNA evidence that ultimately freed Johnson, Robert Keller, the prosecutor, could in good conscience have fought his bid for freedom with the same sort of legal attack that prevailed against the prosecution's DNA evidence in Los Angeles Superior Court.

CALVIN JOHNSON, JR., hardly seemed a likely candidate for trouble with the law. He was a college graduate, with a degree in communications, who worked at Delta Air Lines. He was handsome and articulate, the product of a solid Atlanta family of proud achievers who hoped that he might become a successful broadcaster. But after college he fell in with a wild crowd, and he began finding mischief that soon became real trouble. Around midnight on April 13, 1981, Johnson drove to College Park, a mostly white, working-class town at the edge of the sprawling Atlanta airport, and slipped through a window into a darkened apartment. A neighbor happened to spot him, and she notified police, who arrived a few minutes later to discover Johnson rummaging through the kitchen. He was wearing cutoff jeans, gloves, and—the patrolman who arrested him noted—no underwear. Johnson was carrying a buck knife that he used at his job, at an airport warehouse.

The patrolman who caught Johnson in the act handcuffed him and drove him to the College Park police station, where he was booked on burglary and concealed-weapon charges and locked in a cell. A few hours later, the day shift arrived at the station. Reading the night log and noting the burglary arrest, Detective Lewis Harper and Sergeant G. J. Bencale brought Johnson to the detectives' room and advised him of his rights. Johnson signed the form, but declined to make any statement until he had seen a lawyer. The two officers took him to his cell, and sat down to review his arrest record. Then they did what policemen do: they theorized.

There had been a series of sexual assaults in College Park, the most recent four nights before. A College Park woman named Katherine Lowe had come home from dinner with a friend around midnight, and when she entered her apartment she was grabbed from behind by a man with a knife, who had pried open a sliding glass door. He led her to the bedroom and raped her. The assailant then asked her for money and took ten dollars. Lowe told police that he was a black man of medium build, that he had a mustache, and that he spoke softly. She said that he wore no underwear.

It struck the officers that the burglary suspect they had just talked to—the guy with no underwear—matched the physical description that Lowe had given of her assailant. She had guessed that he weighed a hundred and seventy pounds (Johnson weighed a hundred and sixty); she said he had a mustache (Johnson had a mustache); she said he was soft-spoken (so was Johnson). There was a discrepancy: Katherine Lowe believed that her assailant had been uncircumcised. Nevertheless, the rape had occurred in the same neighborhood as Johnson's burglary, and at the same time of night, and the assailant had also entered through a window. The night before Johnson was arrested, the woman who reported his break-in and a friend had seen a black man who looked like Johnson standing naked behind her apartment, with his clothes in one hand. A few weeks earlier, another woman, Lisa Givens, reported that a black man matching Johnson's description had entered her home, robbed her, and tried to rape her. (The names of all rape victims and witnesses in this article have been changed.) There had been no leads in these cases, and Johnson was beginning to seem very much like a lead.

Detective Harper got a warrant to obtain samples of Calvin Johnson's blood, hair, and saliva, to be tested against the samples taken from Katherine Lowe at the hospital on the night she was raped. There was no DNA technology in 1981—the best science was conventional serology. The tests showed that Johnson was of the same blood type, Type O, as Lowe's rapist, and hair taken from Johnson was of the same type as hairs retrieved from the crime scene. But because the forensic science was relatively imprecise—more than forty per cent of the population has Type O blood—any case would stand or fail on the victim's identification of her attacker.

A Polaroid photograph was taken of Calvin Johnson, and that night the detective who was working on the Katherine Lowe case, E. S. Meares, prepared a photographic lineup and asked Lowe to come to the station. Meares showed her Johnson's picture, along with those of five other black males of roughly the same age and aspect, and asked Lowe if she recognized her assailant. She picked Johnson's photograph.

The case fell to Paul Howard, a rising young prosecutor in the Fulton County district attorney's office. Howard, who is black, believed that he had a strong case, and a Fulton grand jury indicted Johnson on charges of rape, aggravated sodomy, attempted rape, burglary (two counts), armed robbery, and carrying a concealed weapon.

The distraught Johnson family hired a lawyer, Mark Kadish, to defend Johnson, but before the case moved to trial Howard came across an irregularity in the identification process which caused him to doubt whether he could win a conviction on the sex charges, so he dropped them. That left only the burglary and weapon charges, and since Johnson had been caught in the act Kadish agreed to a plea bargain. Johnson pleaded guilty to burglary and possession of a concealed weapon, and in September, 1981, he began serving an eight-year sentence.

In retrospect, it seems possible that Johnson might have been better off if he had been tried for the rape of Katherine Lowe and the other sex crimes. At a trial, he at least stood a chance of acquittal; as it was, he remained convicted of rape in the minds of the law-enforcement officials who one day soon would again decide his fate.

PAUL HOWARD, who is now the Fulton County District Attorney (the first black in Georgia's history to hold that office), says he believes that the evidence strongly implicated Johnson in the Katherine Lowe rape. "If you look at him getting caught in that apartment, where it was located, the time period, the identification, the hairs, the sperm, there's a good chance he would have been convicted," Howard says. Yet he has never publicly explained why he dropped the sex charges, except to vaguely cite a "problem" with the evidence. Neither the police nor Johnson's attorneys nor Johnson himself knew what that problem was.

But a close reading of the police records of the Katherine Lowe investigation reveals a critical police error—an error that would have made a conviction at trial virtually impossible. Once Detective Meares had arranged for Katherine Lowe to view a photographic lineup and she had chosen Johnson's picture, that would have been enough for Howard to bring charges, and possibly for a jury to convict. But Meares, perhaps in the enthusiasm of breaking a difficult case, then did something that is outside accepted practice. He had spoken to Johnson himself, and he knew that Johnson's manner of speaking was distinct from that of the usual suspects who ran through the police station. It occurred to Meares that Katherine Lowe's identification would be even stronger if she could hear Johnson speak. A supplementary police report shows that Meares escorted the victim downstairs to the jail, where she confronted Johnson. "Victim carried on a conversation with perpetrator," the report reads. "Victim identified voice. Also stated that she remembered his big eyes and that she was positive that was the subject that raped her."

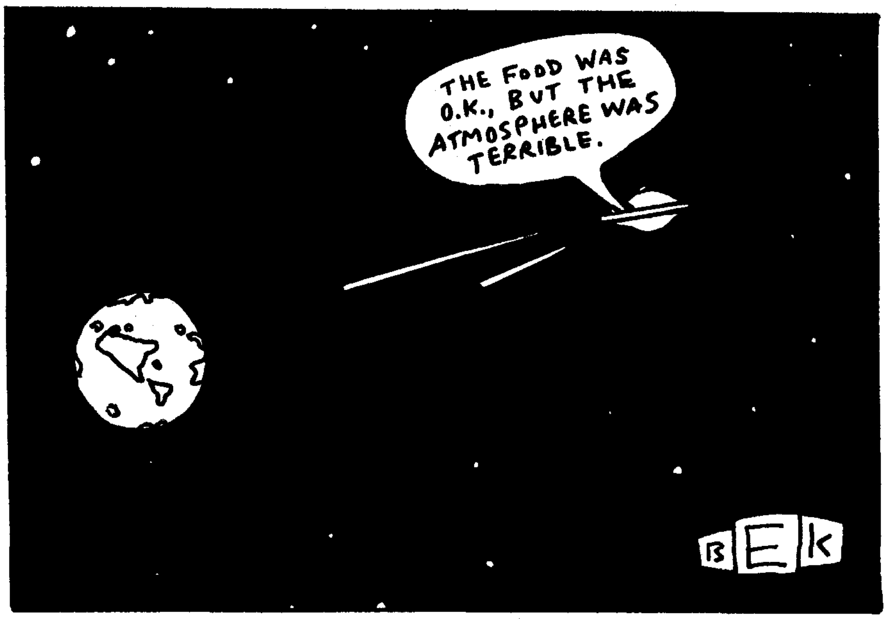
In criminal-defense jargon, what Meares did was called a "one-on-one showup," a procedure that is greatly discouraged, because it is so suggestive. If a victim is asked by a police officer to identify a suspect who is presented alone, rather than in a group, she may infer that the police have already determined the suspect's guilt. Katherine Lowe's jailhouse meeting with Johnson would have legally tainted her entire identification, and without that the case against Johnson would likely have collapsed. Johnson's attorney never found out about the "showup," because the sex charges were dropped. Had the case gone forward, he says, he would certainly have moved the court to suppress Lowe's identification of Johnson.

Did Calvin Johnson rape Katherine Lowe? The legal answer is no, because a police blunder kept the question from the test of a jury, and what can't be known is what Calvin Johnson's defense might have been. That unresolved question, however, became the wellspring of everything that came afterward.

In Georgia's overcrowded prisons, burglars were a low priority, and in December, 1982, Johnson was paroled, after serving fifteen months. He went home to live with his parents and, everyone hoped, to start a new life. He took a job as a courier, and rode to work each morning with his father. In the afternoons, he worked out at a gym, continuing a routine he had begun in prison. His college girlfriend had waited for him, and they began to talk about marriage.

In the early morning of March 9, 1983, a woman named Eve Cooke told police that she had been raped and sodomized in her apartment by an intruder, a black man wearing gloves, who had slipped through an unlocked door and looped a belt around her neck and used it like a choke collar, at one point tightening it so fiercely that she passed out. The intruder had placed a towel, and then a pillowcase, over her head, allowing her only momentary glimpses of his face. But the attacker talked a great deal, Cooke said, and she remembered his voice clearly: "He didn't talk like a Southern black and he didn't talk street lingo or jive. It was smooth, smart, soft-spoken, and more educated with his words."

The College Park police knew instantly that there was a serial rapist loose. Two nights before, another woman, Martha Hudson, had been awakened by a rapist whose method was nearly identical to that described by Cooke. Hudson, who lived about a mile from Cooke, on the Fulton County side of College Park, described her assailant as a black man who wore a glove and put a belt around her neck, using it like a choke collar. During this three-day period, two other women in the neighborhood reported being accosted by a black man, but they escaped unharmed.

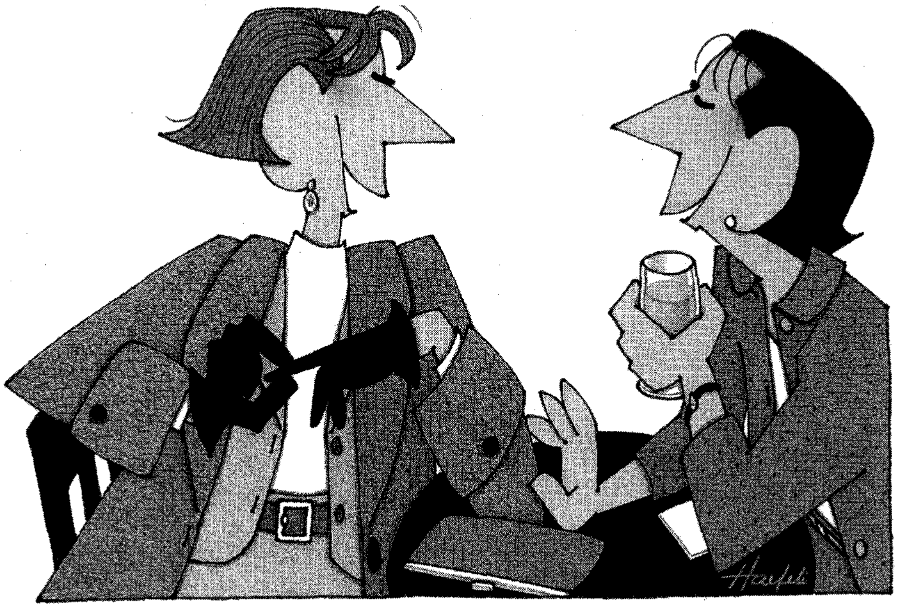

THE FOOD WAS O.K., BUT THE ATMOSPHERE WAS TERRIBLE.
BEK

Among those working on the rape cases were Detective Meares and Detective Harper, who had figured Johnson as the assailant in the rape of Katherine Lowe, two years earlier. By the time of the Eve Cooke rape, Harper and Meares had already begun to speculate that Johnson, who had returned from prison ten weeks earlier, might be the rapist.

After the Cooke rape, Meares signed a report that noted, "Calvin was developed as a suspect. Calvin was arrested in April of 1981 for rape. His m.o. used in 4-81 is similar in nature" to that of the rape of Martha Hudson. A few days later, Detective Harper, who had led a search of Johnson's apartment in the 1981 case, requested a warrant to search the Johnsons' home for evidence in the Cooke and Hudson rapes. In his affidavit seeking the search warrant, Harper wrote, "This officer is personally familiar with Calvin Johnson, having arrested Johnson in April 1981 for similar type crimes and . . . Johnson did enter a plea of guilty to some of the charges as a result of this arrest." The police arrived at the Johnsons' home, and Johnson was cuffed and taken away. Calvin Johnson, Sr., who was home at the time, says he remembers one of the policemen saying to his son as they took him away, "We've got you this time, and you're going for a long, long time."

Jury selection for the trial in the rape of Eve Cooke began in November, 1983, in Clayton County Superior Court, in Jonesboro. The county's population was overwhelmingly white (ninety-two per cent) and mostly working class. Of the forty-two citizens in the jury pool, only a handful were black, and none of them made the final cut.

Prosecuting the case was the Clayton County district attorney, Robert Keller, who, at thirty-six, was already a six-year veteran in the job. Defending Johnson was Akil Secret, a young attorney who had been recommended to the



"I sold his unlisted phone number to telemarketers."

Johnsons by a local judge. As Secret would point out more than once during the trial, he and his client were the only black men before the bench.

Because of the nature of the crime—there were no witnesses to the attack, no fingerprints—the trial turned on the issue of identification, and there was cause for doubt. Eve Cooke had picked Johnson out of a photographic lineup, but she had picked someone else at a live lineup conducted at the Fulton County police station. She testified that she had picked the wrong person at the live lineup because looking at Johnson was too much for her to bear: "I just pushed my eyes away from him and picked someone else."

Martha Hudson, the Fulton County victim, was allowed to testify in the Clayton case because of a Georgia rule allowing testimony from other cases if it demonstrates a pattern of "similar transactions." Hudson had identified Johnson in a live lineup, but she had failed to choose his picture in a photo lineup. The two other women who said that they had been accosted by a black man around the time of the rapes also testified as identifying witnesses. Marie Webb said that on March 7th—several hours before the Hudson rape—she had stepped out of her shower and was confronted by a "clean and educated-sounding" black man, and that she locked herself in the bathroom and then ran out through the front door. Webb, who lived two doors away from Hudson, identified Johnson in a photograph. The last identifying eyewitness was Jennifer Townes, who testified that on the night Eve Cooke was raped—March 9th—a black man had knocked on her door and asked to come in, saying that he wanted to call a cab. She said that she came face to face with the man when she peered through her window and saw him staring back at her. She identified Johnson in the photographic lineup.

All four women, who were white, identified Johnson in court as the man who had accosted or raped them. Each of them said that she was particularly struck by Johnson's eyes. Hudson was a forceful witness. When she was asked to identify the man who had raped her, she looked directly at Johnson and said, "It's the man with the beard sitting right there. You'll get your time." When she had finished her testimony and was returning to her seat, she walked past Johnson at the defendant's table. Lurching toward him, she said, "You stupid bastard!" Secret asked for a recess, which the judge granted.

Secret worked to undermine the identifications, pointing out that none of the women had reported that the man they encountered had had a beard, yet Johnson had worn a full beard two months before the attacks, as was indicated by his photo identification from work. Although the Georgia Crime Lab had identified Johnson's blood type as being the same as that of Cooke's rapist, Secret noted that forty per cent of black males shared that type. And there was some forensic evidence that Secret considered exculpatory: three pubic hairs among Eve Cooke's bedclothes were tested, and were found to belong to a black man, but not to Johnson. Since Cooke testified that she had never had a black person, man or woman, inside her home as a guest, Secret suggested that the hairs must have come from her rapist. Keller's explanation was that the hairs must have come from a laundromat or a public restroom.

The trial lasted for three days, and the jury deliberated for forty-five minutes before announcing that it had found Johnson guilty of rape, aggravated sodomy, and burglary. One of the jurors later said that the victims' testimony had been the most compelling evidence in the case, and that Martha Hudson's outburst clearly demonstrated that there was "no doubt in her mind" that Johnson was guilty. The judge sentenced Johnson to life in prison for the rape conviction, and to fifteen-year terms for the burglary and aggravated-sodomy charges.

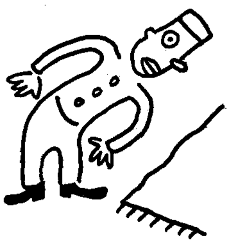
Before the second trial, for the rape of Martha Hudson, the Fulton County district attorney's office offered Johnson a plea bargain, but he refused to admit any guilt, and so that trial began in Fulton County Superior Court, in Atlanta, in September, 1984.

There is no transcript of the trial, but Michael Hauptman, who replaced Secret as Johnson's lawyer, says that it was a virtual replay of the Clayton County trial, with the exception of the racial makeup of the jury—seven blacks and five whites.

Carole Wall, the Fulton County prosecutor, believes that if racial bias was a factor in the Clayton County conviction, race was played effectively in the other direction in Fulton County. "Mike Hauptman, who is my dear friend, uses the racial issue very well," she says. " 'Cops are out to get the only black man in the area,' and so on. He does the racial issue. He'll beat you to death on the racial issue. And he's so smart. When he questioned those College Park cops, it was like clubbing a bunny."

The Fulton County jury deliberated overnight, and returned the next day with its verdict—not guilty. But Johnson, of course, was already in prison, serving a life term.

In 1994, Johnson, who had become something of a jailhouse preacher, helping to lead his fellow-convicts in regular prayer services and Bible study, got a chance at parole, but in order to get it he would be required to acknowledge the crimes for which he was convicted, and he refused to do so.



Two years earlier, Johnson had read a news article about new DNA technology that was being used in forensics to match criminals with their crimes, and that could also be used to clear the wrongly accused, even in long-closed cases, if the evidence had not been lost or destroyed. Johnson got in touch with James Bonner, a public-aid lawyer who worked for the Prisoner Legal Counseling Project, at the University of Georgia School of Law, and Bonner agreed to try to help, although he thought that Johnson had little hope. His only legal recourse was to file what is called an extraordinary motion for a new trial based on new evidence. The problem was, there was no new evidence. In effect, his motion, if certified by the court, was a means by which he could try to hunt for new evidence from within the old evidence through DNA testing. "It was predicated upon the results of a DNA test that we didn't yet have, and hoped we could have, but weren't sure we ever could get," Bonner says.

The evidence, if it still existed, was controlled by the office of the Clayton County district attorney, Robert Keller. To Bonner's surprise, Keller agreed to the test. "They were basically just asking us if we'd do it," Keller says, "and our position was, if the sample was available, that would be the appropriate thing to do."

The evidence was available, but only as a result of happenstance. In Georgia, physical evidence introduced at trial is maintained by the court reporter, who serves at the pleasure of the judge. Stephen E. Boswell, the judge in Johnson's case, had long since retired, and his replacement did not rehire Boswell's reporter, J. Dan Black. In clearing out his things from the courthouse, Black was throwing away all the unclaimed evidence from cases that were no longer active—including the evidence from Johnson's case. Someone from Keller's office noticed the evidence bags from Johnson's case and asked Keller if they should be saved. There was no legal reason to retain the evidence—Johnson's request for DNA testing hadn't yet been made—but Keller had ordered that the bags be placed in a box in his evidence vault.

The box included Eve Cooke's torn underwear, her stained bedsheets, a blue towel that her assailant put over her head, cotton-swab sticks from the "rape kit" that was used to examine her on the night of the assault, glass slides bearing specimens swabbed from her vagina and cervix, and small packages containing hairs found at the scene and those taken from Johnson after he was arrested. Johnson's sister Judy, who worked at the United States Department of Transportation in Washington, found a laboratory, called Genetic Design, in Greensboro, North Carolina, that agreed to perform the DNA testing. In October, 1995, the box and all its contents were removed from the evidence vault in Georgia and, accompanied by a Clayton County investigator, transported to Greensboro.

Michael DeGuglielmo, a Genetic Design DNA expert, decided to test two of the items in the box—the blue towel and portions of the vaginal swabs. He extracted DNA from those items, hoping to compare it to Johnson's DNA, but he didn't have a fresh specimen from Johnson. Testing was suspended until a blood sample from Johnson could be provided. Because of bureaucratic inertia, or perhaps because prison authorities were unenthusiastic about Johnson's quest, it took nearly a year to get the blood sample.

Finally, in late 1996, Johnson's blood was sent to Genetic Design. By this time, though, DeGuglielmo had left the company for another firm. Three months later, the division of Genetic Design which concentrated on identity testing was sold to a national chain, LabCorp, headquartered in Burlington, North Carolina.

Johnson and his family knew none of this. "I called one day, and Genetic Design was shut down," Judy Johnson recalls. "I thought, My God, where's DeGuglielmo? I couldn't find him." Meanwhile, as Johnson's family searched for another attorney, a childhood friend of his told him about the Innocence Project. Johnson wrote to Barry Scheck, had the transcript of his trial sent, filled out an extensive questionnaire required by the project, and was accepted as a client.

By another bit of luck, the box of evidence from Johnson's case was rescued after the Genetic Design division was sold to LabCorp. In March, 1997, seventeen months after the evidence was released by Keller's office, the box was transported from Greensboro to the new corporate owners' headquarters. There the material sat in storage for seven more months, and was then transported to the LabCorp forensic-science unit, in Research Triangle Park, an hour away. A senior director of that facility, Dr. Marcia Eisenberg, who had worked on several cases with Neufeld and Scheck before, says, "This was a case where we get this box of evidence, and we're trying to get Barry and Peter to dig up enough history on what is in this box. We're faxing them Xerox copies of bags in a box, and trying to get them to match them up to the original court documents. I mean, this is everybody's case from hell." Not only was the material now fifteen years old but it had been sliced and diced to pieces in two earlier rounds of testing—the original serology tests for the trial, and the tests at Genetic Design, which were never completed. The vaginal and cervical swabs, which once looked like Q-Tips, had been reduced to tattered sticks without cotton on the ends. LabCorp decided to test material on the vaginal slide—a glass plate on which body fluids from the victim are smeared for microscopic examination—along with portions of the towel, bedsheet, and Eve Cooke's underwear.

On November 11, 1997, LabCorp reported its findings to the Innocence Project. It had indeed been able to find genetic material on the items it tested, but only from the victim; it could not find sufficient material from the assailant even to compare with Johnson's blood sample. The long-awaited test, in other words, had failed to exonerate Johnson.

That might well have ended it for Johnson. Keller could have gone to court, declared Johnson's innocence quest a failure, and tried to put a stop to any further testing. Whether or not Keller would have done this can't be known, because Keller was not told that LabCorp's tests had been conducted, or that the results had been inconclusive. Nor did Neufeld inform Keller what he was about to do next.

Neufeld believed that if anyone in the world could find the DNA answer he was looking for in the old and infinitesimally small sample that was left it was a longtime friend and colleague, Dr. Edward Blake, a partner at Forensic Science Associates, in Richmond, California, near Berkeley.

"If we type this slide and there's no result," Neufeld told Blake, "then Mr. Johnson spends the rest of his life in prison."

In the world of forensic science, Neufeld says, "there are a bunch of .300 hitters, and then there's Ted Williams; Ed Blake is Ted Williams." Blake, whose rare gifts in the laboratory are broadly acknowledged, would be the first to agree with Neufeld's Ted Williams analogy, and he offers one of his own to describe what is distinct about his work. "Jack Benny will pick up a violin, and he'll make the music that Jack Benny makes," he says, "and Jascha Heifetz will pick up the violin and make the music that he makes."

While the science is the same for all forensic specialists, LabCorp failed to find male DNA through its testing, Blake says, because "of the skill with which the analysis was done, to be quite candid with you." Actually, the difference lies at least partly in the laboratories themselves. LabCorp is a publicly held company with labs nationwide, and, by company policy, its scientists will perform only tasks that they have specifically been asked (and paid) to perform. Blake, whose lab Neufeld describes as a "boutique operation," will do whatever it takes to obtain an accurate, definitive result.

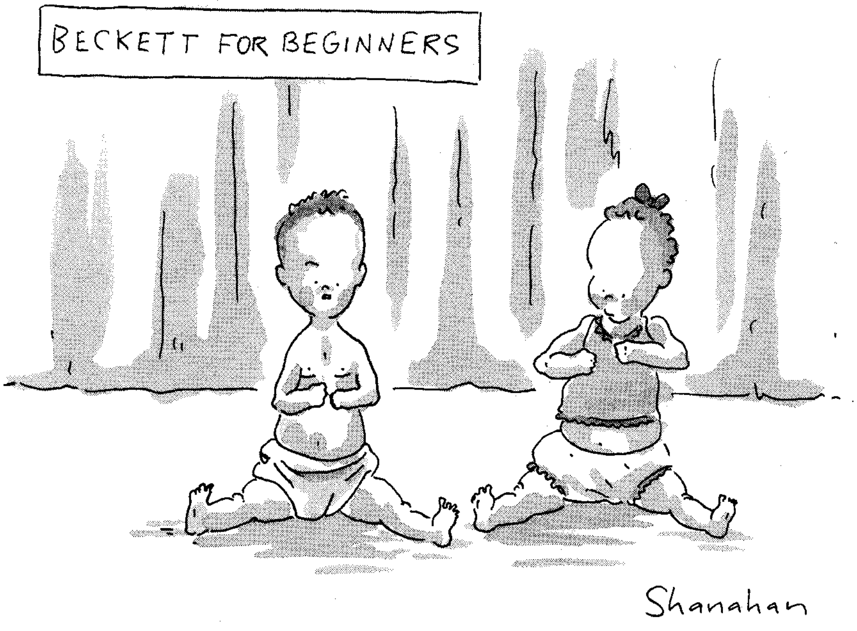
In rape cases, the crucial step is a procedure called "differential extraction," which is the process of separating the male portion of a sample from the female portion. This is necessary because a stain on the victim's undergarments, for example, will have material that comes from both the male attacker and the female victim. Unless the male and female cells are separated, the DNA contained inside them will mix together, and confuse the identification test that comes later.

What makes separation possible is the nature of a sperm cell: its walls are tougher than the walls of other cells. In a test tube, the tiny speck of evidence is bathed in a sort of chemical detergent, which is strong enough to break open the cells of the non-sperm material, releasing the non-male DNA inside. The tube containing the whole mixture is placed on a centrifuge, which spins until the material in the tube has separated into two layers, with the sperm cells settling on the bottom, like sediment in a bottle of wine. The non-male material is decanted into a second tube, and what remains in the first tube—presumably sperm cells—is bathed again, in a stronger detergent, breaking down the tough sperm-cell walls and releasing the DNA inside for testing.

It is in this differential-extraction process that LabCorp failed. It is a delicate procedure, and Dr. Blake is known for his ability to coax results from it, in part because he takes extra steps that maximize his chances for success. Blake says that the key to this part of the process is caution, using just the right amount of chemical detergent in the first phase to wash away the non-sperm matter without disturbing the sperm-cell walls. To separate the solution into male and female layers, Blake uses a centrifuge that is angled horizontally, rather than at the customary forty-five degrees. He does this to increase the likelihood that the sperm cells will actually settle on the bottom of the tube rather than splashing up along the sides, where they might get decanted away with the non-sperm material. After he has completed the separation, Blake takes another extra step: he puts the material at the bottom of the first tube back under the microscope to make certain that the sperm is there and that non-sperm material has been removed.

Such a painstaking routine pays dividends. In Johnson's case, for example, Blake examined the remnants of the swab sticks (which LabCorp didn't examine) and found a tiny fibre of DNA-laden cotton embedded in one stick.

Blake's success in the lab has made him not only a mythic figure in forensics but a coveted asset in a legal fight, on either side of the aisle. His confidence in the lab sometimes extends to strong feelings about the legal case itself, a tendency that some find discordant with the scientist's mandate for dispassionate inquiry. Blake worked with Neufeld and Scheck on O. J. Simpson's defense, even though he would be the first to concede that the scientific test-results offered by



"WAITING FOR THUMBKIN"

"People shouldn't get married unless they've been married."

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the prosecution were unassailable. The dream-team defense's mission, after all, was not to illuminate scientific truth (such as the 6.8-billion-to-one certainty that blood found on Simpson's socks belonged to his murdered ex-wife); its purpose was to attack the prosecution's methods until the science itself, as Blake puts it, "became irrelevant."

When Blake gets involved in a legal fight, he can seem as if he's "on a mission," says Jim Catterson, the district attorney for Suffolk County, New York. Catterson and Blake were adversaries in a rape case that could be a textbook study in the paradox of DNA in the courtroom: for all DNA's intrinsic immutability, advocates in a legal case routinely persuade themselves (and sometimes a jury) to disbelieve the science. In the case of an accused rapist named Kerry Kotler, the reliability of DNA evidence was literally played both ways by both sides, and alternately proved to be both Kotler's salvation and his undoing.

The Kotler case was one of the first taken up by the Innocence Project, and it has some striking parallels to the case of Calvin Johnson. But it is more like the O. J. Simpson case in one key regard: Peter Neufeld would rather not talk about it. When I mentioned Kotler to Neufeld, he began lawyering, saying that "it was a weird case" and shouldn't be included in any story about the Innocence Project.

Kotler, who is white, was a middle-class kid prone to trouble, a runaway and a car thief. In 1981, when he was in his early twenties, he was convicted on a statutory-rape charge. While free on probation, he was arrested for the knife-point rape of a thirty-three-year-old East Farmingdale, Long Island, housewife named Patricia Gould. The authorities were especially eager to find and punish the rapist, because Mrs. Gould had been raped three years earlier by a masked intruder whom they believed to be the same assailant. In the second rape, the man greeted Mrs. Gould as she returned from the grocery store, and, before running a carpenter's knife over her skin, taunted her by saying, "I came back for another visit. We're going to do it all over again."

Like Calvin Johnson, Kotler protested his innocence, and there were some problems with the police investigation here, too, including a police report that seemed to the defense to have been altered in order to make it easier to place Kotler at the scene of the crime. But, as with Johnson, the police were wedded to a theory that featured Kotler as the prime suspect, and there was compelling evidence that seemed to incriminate him. The best forensic science of the time, conventional serology, narrowed the universe of possible suspects to three per cent of the population, and that three per cent included Kotler. (The jury was not allowed to hear this.) There was also the testimony of the victim, who identified Kotler in two police lineups, in a photograph, and by voice, when he and several other men were instructed to say the menacing words "We're going to do it all over again." The jury believed her, and in 1982 Kotler was sentenced to a maximum of fifty years in prison.

Like Calvin Johnson, Kotler filed an appeal from prison, and it was unsuccessful. Then, in the late nineteen-eighties, he heard about DNA-evidence testing and found out about the Innocence Project. The evidence in his case was dispatched to Blake's lab.

This time, though, Blake could report no findings that warranted instant exoneration. In the early nineteen-nineties, DNA testing allowed scientists a very limited spectrum of alleles, or genetic markers, for comparison tests. As it happened, Kotler's tested alleles were the same as those of the victim, Patricia Gould. (About ten per cent of the population shared this type.) The evidence specimen, taken from the rape kit and Gould's garments eleven years earlier, revealed the presence of the genetic trait shared by Gould and Kotler, but it also contained another marker, which neither Gould nor Kotler possessed. In Blake's view, that could mean only one of two things: that Kotler was innocent, and the marker he found came from Gould's assailant; or that Kotler might have been the assailant, but only if Gould had had sexual relations with another partner near the time of the assault, thus explaining the mystery marker found in the specimen.

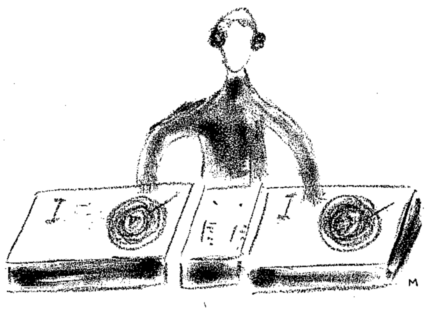
To Neufeld and Scheck, Blake's results seemed conclusive enough to exonerate Kotler: Blake had found in the sample a genetic marker that Kotler didn't possess, which must mean that he was innocent. (Patricia Gould had sworn under oath that she had not had any consensual sexual relations in the time period which would make a mixed sample possible.) Blake leaned toward the same conclusion, but he could not be unequivocal, and his report stated that Kotler "appears" to have been eliminated as the "primary source" of the semen.

Catterson, in the district attorney's office, refused to agree to a new hearing for Kotler. There was an obvious answer to the stalemate, which was to test a sample from Gould's husband. If he possessed the unidentified marker, Kotler could not be excluded, because there was no way of knowing whether the other marker, the one he shared with the victim, was his or Gould's. But if Gould's consensual partner did not possess the marker, that had to mean, according to Kotler's lawyers, that it came from the assailant, and it could not have been Kotler, because he didn't possess that particular trait.

On this point the case veered from the province of scientific inquiry into the realm of human relations. Gould told prosecutors that she had had sex with no one but her husband, so the matter could be easily resolved by taking a blood sample from him and testing it for the unidentified marker. Catterson had no reason to doubt Gould, and since he was a tough-on-crime politician, his sympathies were all with the victim. He saw no reason to disturb her further. For a year, Catterson opposed the testing of the husband. Finally, a judge ordered that it be done, and the sample was sent to Blake, who found that it did not contain the marker. His conclusion: Kotler could not have been Gould's assailant.

Catterson still firmly believed in Kotler's guilt, just as the police and prosecutors in Calvin Johnson's case continued to believe in his. Catterson was particularly affected by a meeting he had with Gould, who said she was so terrified of Kotler that she and her family had moved out of state. She told him that someone once left a menacing note on her car windshield making a reference to her daughter; she was sure that it was Kotler, who was out on bail at the time. On another occasion, she said that even after she moved away she received a telephone call from someone she was certain was Kotler, letting her know that she had been found. "I thought Kotler was the Devil incarnate," Catterson says. "He tried to put the hit on one of the reporters in the courtroom. He enjoys making women squirm. He enjoys torturing people mentally. He likes to get the edge on women."

When presented with Blake's new test results, the district attorney's office resisted. The prosecutors requested that their own experts review the findings and, when those experts agreed with Blake, raised the question of contamination: Couldn't the evidence sample have been contaminated somehow during the eleven years it spent in an evidence vault, or while it was being conveyed from one laboratory to the next? The experts said that that was highly unlikely. Catterson then questioned their reliability; he believed (and believes) that they were "in awe of Blake." The D.A.'s office consulted a DNA specialist in Boston, who confirmed Blake's findings. Meanwhile, Catterson was getting pounded by Scheck and Neufeld in court and excoriated in the press, most fiercely by the newspaper columnist Jim Dwyer, who recently wrote a book about DNA exonerations with Neufeld and Scheck entitled "Actual Innocence," which will be published in February. The news coverage became so intense that a flustered Catterson resorted to defending himself by blurting to a reporter, "I am no reactionary cretin."



Finally, in December, 1992, Catterson gave up the fight and declared in court that he would not contest Kotler's motion to set aside his guilty verdict. "Catterson went kicking and screaming," Neufeld says now, "and he was backed into a corner where the press was going to strangle him."

After nearly eleven years in prison, Kerry Kotler went free, but he was not inclined to forgive and forget. He accused the police and Catterson of misconduct, and Scheck, speaking to reporters, said of the Suffolk justice system, "This place was what Mississippi must have been like in the sixties." The press noticed heroic qualities in Kotler, dutifully reporting his assertions of law-enforcement malfeasance and passing along such tidbits as his lawyers' suggestion that Kotler had the stuff of a good lawyer, and that he might even attend law school. He appeared on ABC's "Primetime Live" program, and galloped on horseback on the beach while reporters took notes.

And, unlike Calvin Johnson, Kotler had the prospect of financial remuneration for the injustice he had suffered. Scheck and Neufeld pressed Kotler's case under New York's Unjust Conviction and Imprisonment Act. Kotler did not enter law school, as it turned out, but went to work as a commercial fisherman and diver.

For his part, Jim Catterson refused to apologize for Kotler's conviction, and he did not surrender his belief that a guilty man had been set free. In fact, Catterson believes that future developments in DNA testing will eventually validate the prosecution's position. Ed Blake says that he has seen this response from prosecutors before; he calls it the "white-hat syndrome." He explains, "I don't know a prosecutor that I've ever worked with who doesn't believe, as far deep in his heart as you can ferret, that he advocates on behalf of justice, truth, and the American way. He firmly believes that he rides a white horse, shoots silver bullets, and wears a white hat. And for somebody like that to come to terms with having put an innocent person behind bars for a significant portion of his life is a very, very difficult thing to grapple with."

Then, in the early hours of an August morning in 1995, something happened that caused a dramatic reversal of roles in the Kotler case. A twenty-year-old female college student left a Hampton Bays bar and was driving toward William Floyd Parkway when she was pulled over by a man who flashed his headlights and showed her a badge. After telling her to follow him in her car to a site about a mile away, the man told the young woman that she was driving erratically, and that she would have to take a breath test. When she got out of her car, the man pulled a knife and forced her into his car, then drove her to the woods and raped her. After the attack, the woman later told police, the assailant did something strange: he got a plastic water bottle he'd brought from his car and douched his victim—an attempt, police concluded, to wash away evidence.

The young woman was able to give only a partial description of her attacker, but she did know what model car he was driving—a white Pontiac Grand Am—and she was able to remember several numbers on its license plate. The police ran a computer check on that information and discovered that there was only one such car registered on Long Island. They were questioning the woman who owned the car when Kerry Kotler drove up in it—she was his girlfriend. "They seized the car and started working the case," Catterson says. "And, remember, we had his blood. We couldn't believe that this guy would be so arrogant. You could have knocked me over with a feather when I heard this guy pulled this stupid stuff again. We had him by the balls."

Nevertheless, as the new rape investigation proceeded, Neufeld and Scheck continued to push Kotler's suit for financial reparations. (In July of 1997, they won a $1.5 million award.)

In the new investigation, two pre-indictment lab tests linked Kotler's DNA to the crime scene, but Kotler's new attorney, Jack Litman, wasn't satisfied. In early 1997, the judge agreed to Litman's request for an independent lab test of Kotler's choosing. The evidence was gathered and brought to California to be tested by Ed Blake. This time, Blake's results were unambiguous. "I would say without any hesitation whatsoever," Blake says now, "that there is absolutely no doubt that the source of the sperm in the second case is Kerry Kotler."

Faced with such odds, Litman, an old friend of Neufeld's, decided to mount a Simpson defense. That is, given the fact that Kotler's DNA was all over the crime scene (his semen was found on the victim's clothes and on the swabs from her rape kit), Litman had to prove that someone other than Kerry Kotler had placed it there, and the Simpson model suggested itself: the cops did it. Litman developed the theory that the police, driven by their animus toward Kotler, had looted his trash for used condoms and then spread his semen over the victim's clothes and the specimens from the rape kit.

To say the least, it was a long-shot defense. In his favor, though, Kotler had one surprising witness—Ed Blake. While working on Kotler's exoneration in the first case, Blake had developed a pointed opinion about the prosecution's reluctance to set Kotler free: they were in the grip of the white-hat syndrome, and it seemed entirely possible to him that the authorities would frame Kotler.

The fact that the assailant in the second case had douched the victim puzzled Blake. The police and prosecutors thought the explanation was obvious: the attacker, perhaps someone who knew about the probative reach of forensic science, wanted to wash away the evidence. "But remember what a douching device primarily is," Blake says. "It's primarily a device for introducing something, not for removing something." He came to believe in the possibility that police, or some agent acting for them, could have used the plastic water bottle to plant Kotler's semen at the scene.

Blake based this view on what he found in Kotler's semen, testifying that it contained massive amounts of staphylococcus bacteria, which, he said, could have grown so rampantly only in a liquid state.

The jury didn't believe it. Kotler was convicted in July, 1997, and sent back to prison to serve a sentence of seven to twenty-one years.

Looking back, Neufeld still insists that Kotler's exoneration was right—"We've never been wrong in any of our exonerations. . . . We haven't been"—but he acknowledges that the ironies of the case are inescapable. "What is true," Neufeld says a bit grudgingly, "is that the same science that exonerated him on the other rape brought about his undoing in a subsequent matter four years after he was released from prison."

Catterson, however, has no difficulty at all explaining what happened in the case of Kerry Kotler: a rapist got his due. He insists that he is interested only in justice, not vindication, but he cannot resist a dig at the exoneration crusaders. "This is an interesting case, because it chips away at the clay feet of the Neufelds of this world," Catterson says. "Isn't that ironic? Hoist by their own petard. It's really—it's justice. Finally, somebody's got justice in this world."

In the fall of 1998, three years after Calvin Johnson's evidence box was sent to North Carolina to be examined, Blake tested a cervical slide from Eve Cooke's rape kit and the tiny cotton fibre of DNA that he had managed to find on the remnants of the swab stick. On November 20th, he reported to Neufeld and Scheck that Johnson "is eliminated as a potential source of the spermatozoa." A few days later, Neufeld wrote to Robert Keller, Johnson's prosecutor, giving him the results and asking that Keller respond when he had had a chance to consult with his own forensic specialists about the findings.

For Keller, Neufeld's letter was a bolt from the sky. The last he knew, the Calvin Johnson evidence was in North Carolina, being tested by LabCorp. Now he suddenly found out that the box was in Richmond, California, having been sent there by Johnson's attorney without consulting Keller's office, to be examined by a forensic scientist of Peter Neufeld's choosing. And this scientist said that Calvin Johnson was innocent.

Keller didn't know what to make of Blake's report, or of the assertion that LabCorp's testing had been inconclusive. He went to his expert, Dr. George

Herrin, of the Georgia Crime Lab, and asked about Blake. The technicians at the crime lab knew all about Blake, and they believed in his results. "Blake's reputation with our Georgia Crime Lab was such that our guys basically told us, 'If Blake said it was O.K., it was O.K.,' " Keller says.

This presented Keller with a dilemma. His conviction of Calvin Johnson in 1983 had been a big victory, both in the courtroom and with his constituency, and he still believed it was a righteous conviction. But things had changed, not only legally, with the new DNA evidence, but politically, too. Clayton County had been mostly white and mostly working class in 1983, when Keller obtained Johnson's conviction. Since then, Atlanta's boom had spilled into Clayton County, recasting its demography, to become sharply more middle class and multiracial. To fight the exoneration of a black man whose innocence now seemed to have been validated by DNA, and whose champion was the famous Peter Neufeld, of New York City, posed an unappealing political prospect.

Keller says that he and his assistants considered their options. They could have attacked the DNA evidence, particularly regarding the sinuous journey that it had taken from the time it left Keller's vault until Blake reported his results. The evidence was in the defense's control after it left North Carolina, and certainly could have been subject to tampering or accidental contamination or mislabelling. Even Blake suggested that a fresh blood sample be obtained from the victim, Eve Cooke, to insure that the evidence he examined was, in fact, from her case. It is difficult to imagine that, had their roles been reversed, Neufeld would not have harassed Keller about the evidence chain.

Also, Keller could have attacked the conclusions of the DNA findings themselves. Eve Cooke had had consensual sex the day before her attack, raising the possibility that the semen tested by Blake came not from her assailant but from her consensual sexual partner. It is a fairly common scenario suggested by prosecutors, and Blake and Neufeld derisively call it "the unindicted co-ejaculator theory." But tests showed that the DNA in the tested specimen was probably from a black man, and Eve Cooke had testified that she'd never had a black person in her home. In any case, Keller says, his office was not able to find Eve Cooke, which made everything else moot. "We didn't have a victim," he says.

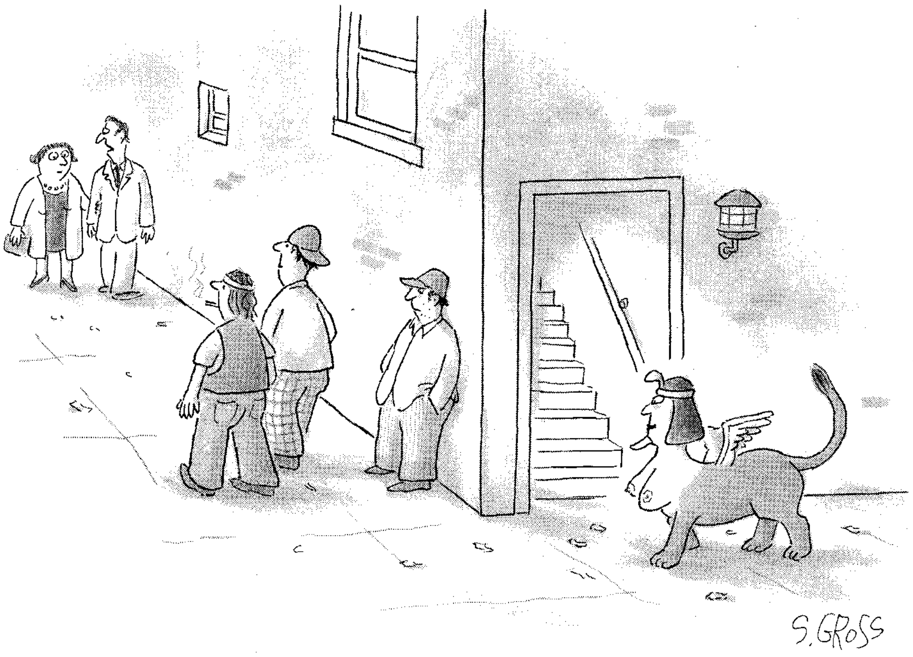
Keller did ask for one more test. Although he had argued at the trial that the pubic hairs found in the bedclothes were irrelevant to the case—they had been picked up at a laundromat or a public restroom, he'd said—he now wanted them tested. One was sent to LabCorp, which determined that it belonged to the same person whose DNA Blake had found among the other evidence. That decided it for Keller, who put aside all the other questions he had.

CALVIN JOHNSON was twenty-five when he was sent to prison for the rape conviction, and he was released a few weeks before his forty-second birthday. After coming home, Johnson was showered with job offers and interview requests, and for a while he maintained a busy speaking schedule. He was flown by private plane to speak at a church in Alabama, and he even ministered in Uganda.

Unlike New York, Georgia does not have a law providing compensation for people who have been wrongfully imprisoned, but Neufeld is preparing a "private bill" that would pay Johnson from the state treasury for his time and anguish. In the meantime, Johnson has a job (as a Transit Authority station manager) and a new girlfriend, and is living in his parents' home, a cramped apartment in a faded little town called Hapeville, near the airport. The College Park police station is two miles away. I asked Johnson if he is worried about new troubles with the police. "I look at it like this," he said. "They got DNA now, you know? So I'll be O.K."

That is the allure of DNA evidence—its suggestion of absolute immutability. But the Kotler case and, indeed, Johnson's own suggest that whatever truth DNA holds for criminal justice is revealed only through the lens of human advocates. DNA exonerated Kerry Kotler, and then it convicted him again, over the objections of a scientist who became his advocate. DNA freed Johnson, but Georgia police and prosecutors still have not exonerated him completely in their minds.

Lewis Harper, who is now the deputy chief of police in College Park, is among those who continue to believe in the rightness of Johnson's arrest. He and his officers know that Johnson has returned to the neighborhood. "It's something that we can always keep in the back of our head," Harper says. "If we start having these problems again, we can certainly rely on our memory and look at anything that might be related." ♦



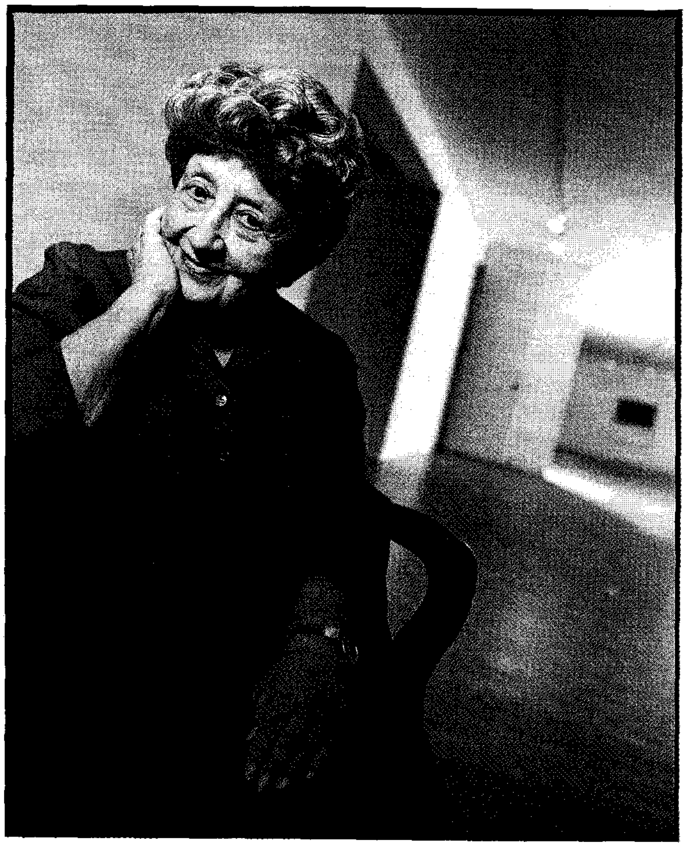
"I'm in the mood for some good Egyptian food, too. But who in the neighborhood would know of a good place to go?"

PROFILE

AN EYE FOR THE NEW

A private woman's pervasive influence in the contemporary art world.

BY CALVIN TOMKINS



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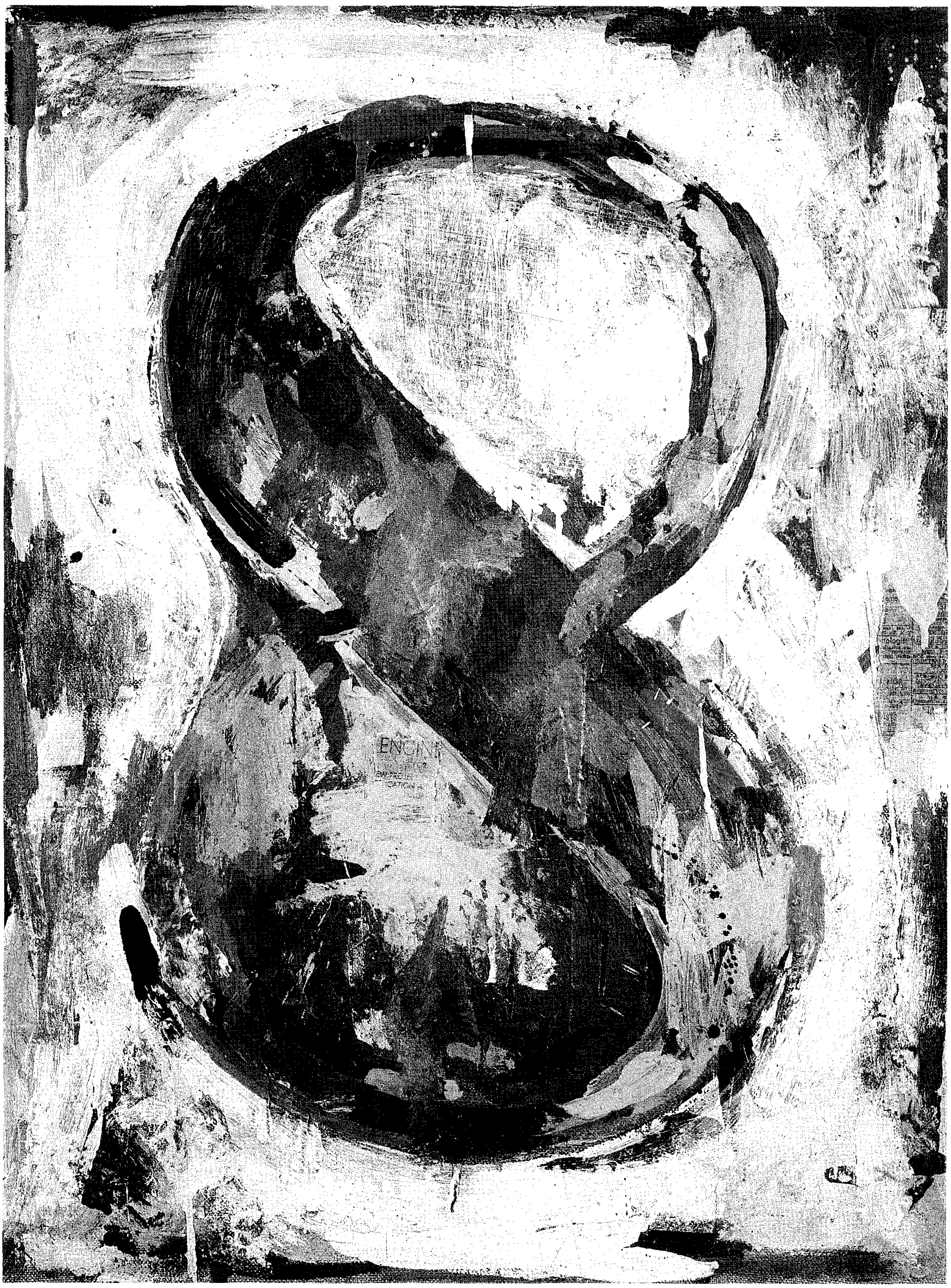
ILEANA SONNABEND enters the restaurant unobtrusively, wearing a shapeless gray dress that somehow looks elegant on her. She is eighty-five, plump, and slightly stooped, but the grandmotherly appearance is deceptive; there is a seignorial calm about her, and her glance is sharp and alert.

Other diners rise to greet her. She is well known here at Da Silvano, the art world's reigning downtown hangout, which is only a few blocks from the SoHo gallery she has run for three decades. This is the first time I have seen her since the death, in late August, of Leo Castelli, her former husband and lifelong best friend. Their sixty-seven-year relationship was a sustaining influence in both their lives, but, as Leo sank deeper into illness and withdrawal, Ileana came to terms with its ending. "I really started mourning Leo a long time ago," she tells me.

Castelli was the most famous art dealer of our time—more famous than many of the artists he represented—while Ileana, who was remarried in 1960 to Michael Sonnabend, has remained a little-known and rather mysterious figure even within the art world. Her role in the formation of the Castelli Gallery is rarely mentioned. Her own gallery in Paris, which she started in 1962, established the European reputations of Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Andy Warhol, Claes Oldenburg, Roy Lichtenstein, James Rosenquist, Jim Dine, and several other American artists (some, but not all, of whom were represented by Castelli in the United States); the Sonnabend Gallery in New York, which dates from 1970, reversed the flow by opening the American market to a new generation of Europeans. In many ways, her contribution to post-1950 international art has been as important as Castelli's, but, even in the publicity-driven art world of the nineteen-eighties and nineties, Ileana has kept a low profile. Her friends attribute this to shyness and reticence, but it is more complicated than that. "Ileana is a cross between Buddha and Machiavelli," Brenda Richardson, a museum curator who has worked closely with her for years, said recently. "The Buddha part is that incredibly still, centered quiet, which is a very powerful thing. At the same time, she is clearly Machiavellian in her shrewdness, not to mention her manipulativeness."

The Sonnabend Gallery has often been a showcase for difficult and uningratiating art, and, upon occasion, for art so rigorously noncommercial that it was impossible to sell. That has never deterred Ileana, although it has sometimes obliged her to part with works from her private collection to keep the gallery afloat. Her collection, in spite of these de-accessions, may well turn out to be her most impressive legacy. In addition to the vast numbers of contemporary paintings, sculptures, drawings, and prints that Ileana and Michael Sonnabend have acquired over the years, the collection includes significant holdings in Art Deco furniture and decorative arts, vintage photographs, and God knows what else—there is no catalogue raisonné, not even a rough inventory, and the parts of the collection that have been shown publicly, at the Baltimore Museum of Art and the Art Museum of Princeton University, and at several museums in Europe, are generally believed to represent only the tip of an ever-expanding iceberg. One of the strange things about the collection is that most of it has always been either in storage or out on loan. The Sonnabends never have more than a few pictures hanging in their apartment, on lower Fifth Avenue—an apartment that I was not allowed to visit, but which, I have been told, has the nondescript, temporary look of a graduate student's sublet. Where, I once asked Ileana, is the pleasure in collecting what you don't live with and rarely see? "I'll tell you where," she said, in her

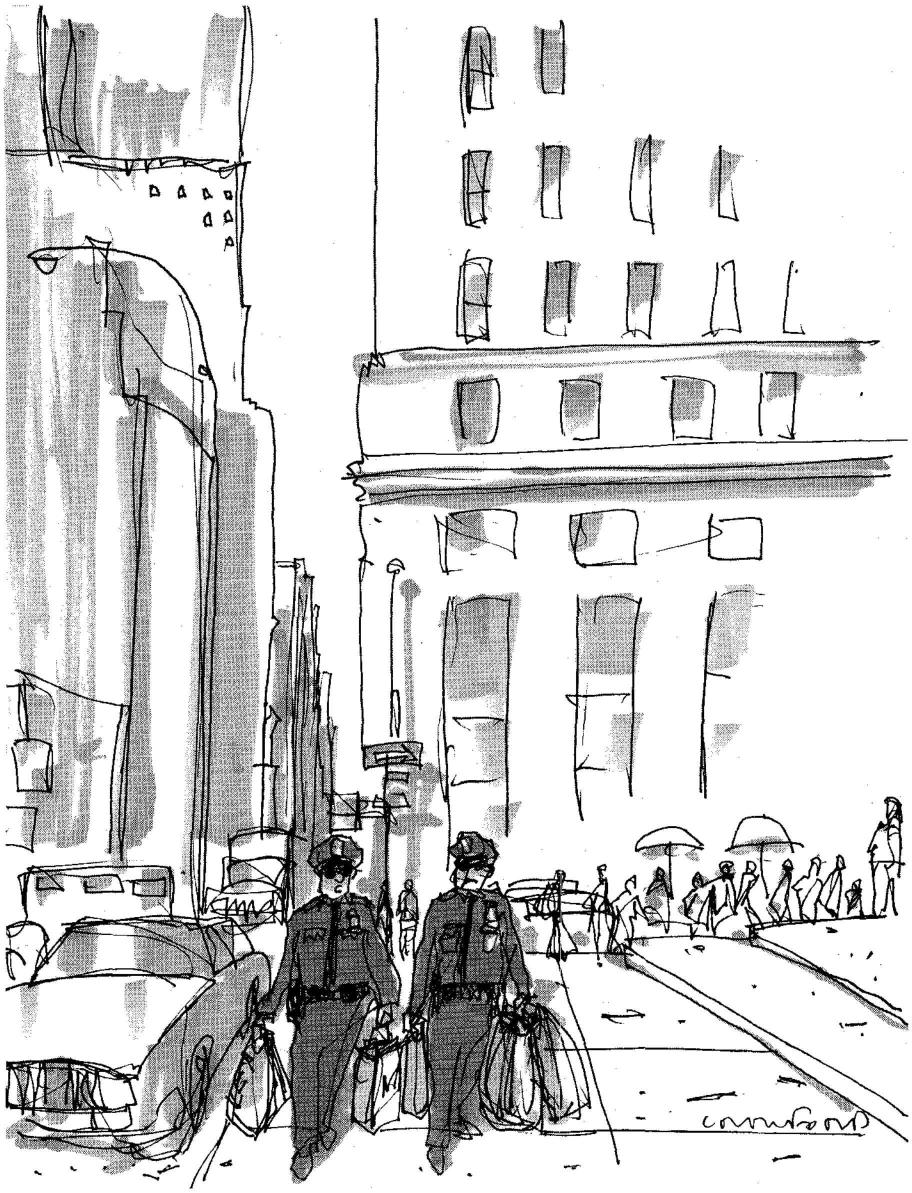


Ileana Sonnabend at her gallery, photographed by Mary Ellen Mark, and Jasper Johns's "Number 8" (1959), from her collection.

soft, indecipherably accented voice. "Every time you see something of yours in a show, or a museum, or a catalogue, you say, 'Ah, there it is, my little painting.' It's a very complex experience, really. The truth is that I am not very possessive."

On another occasion, Ileana said she thought that gallery owners were better collectors than collectors. Not many gallery owners are as acquisitive as Ileana, however—certainly not Leo Castelli, who managed to hold on to remarkably few of the great contemporary works that passed through his hands. It is generally agreed that Castelli's personal response to works of art was neither as rich nor as complex as Ileana's. "Ileana takes more pleasure in art and artists than Leo does," Jasper Johns has said. "I don't think Leo really likes works of art in that way—he likes to sell art." Rauschenberg, the artist whom Ileana has been closest to over the years, believes that she has a deeper intuitive understanding of his work than anyone else. "It always seemed to me that Leo went for the intellectual side, and she headed to the sensual," he told me. "Let's just say I've never finished a painting without wondering what Ileana would think of it."

In the art business, as Castelli once remarked, you need a good eye and also a good ear. To suggest that the Castelli Gallery came together around Leo's ear and Ileana's eye would be overly simplistic, but there is no doubt that the combination of their very different approaches was crucial to the gallery's early success, and to many subsequent developments in contemporary art. "Leo and Ileana were divorced legally, but never emotionally or professionally," as Leo's friend Barbara Jakobson puts it. They shared certain artists, collaborated on exhibitions, and consulted each other on a daily basis. Their personal and professional relationship was deeply resented by Castelli's second wife, Antoinette (Toiny) du Bost, a French au-pair girl he had met on the beach in East Hampton in the early nineteen-sixties; it was accepted, if not exactly encouraged, by his third, Barbara Bertozzi, a young Italian-born art historian whom Castelli married in 1996, when he was eighty-nine and she was thirty-three. (Ileana, asked by a journalist for her thoughts on this marriage, gave one of her sibylline replies: "I have many thoughts, but no statement.") By that time, the Castelli Gallery had been in decline for several years, and a number of its artists had defected to other dealers. Last spring, Castelli and his new wife moved the gallery from SoHo to a much smaller space uptown, at 59 East Seventy-ninth Street; its future, without Castelli, is uncertain.

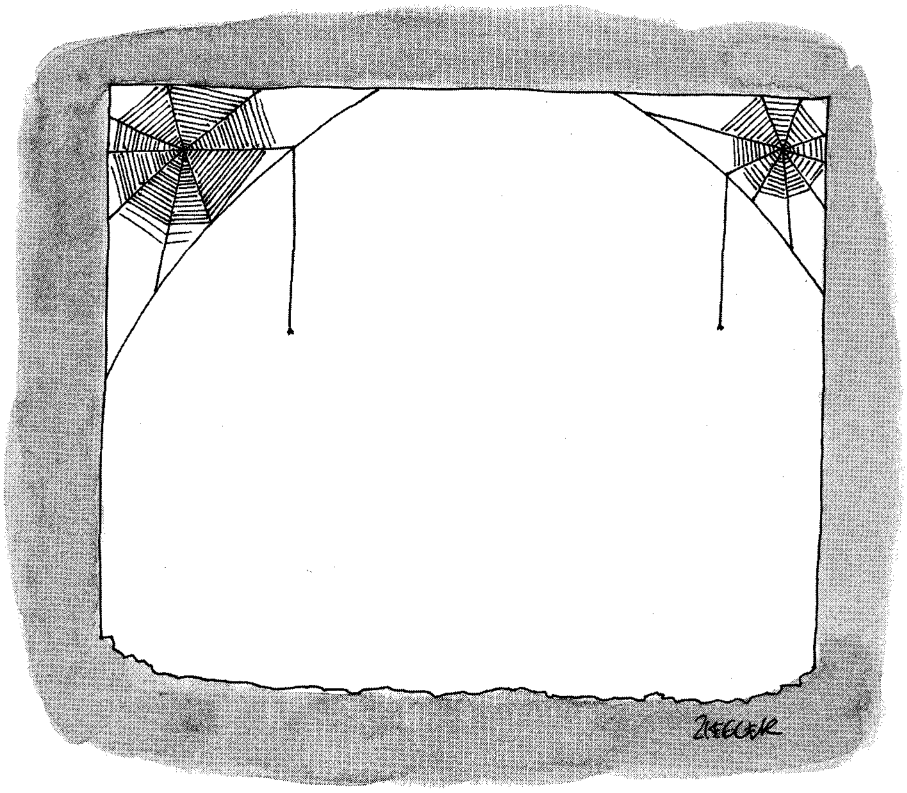


"If I'd known shopping could be this easy, I would have dressed up as a cop ages ago!"

The Sonnabend Gallery, meanwhile, is moving in February to a large space at 536 West Twenty-second Street, in Chelsea, the new mecca for contemporary galleries driven out of SoHo by high rents and boutique culture. At some point, Ileana will turn over the direction of her gallery to Antonio Homem, who has been with her for thirty years, and whom she and Michael Sonnabend legally adopted in the early eighties. The adoption puzzled people at the time—Antonio was in his forties then, and had a teen-age son of his own—but it simplified the eventual transfer of the gallery and its assets. At present, Ileana is still in charge, making all the major decisions affecting the gallery, keeping herself informed about the art market and other matters (she is addicted to crime stories in the *Daily News*), and taking discreet care of Michael Sonnabend, who retains, at the age of ninety-nine, astonishing reserves of wit and independence. The only real sadness in Ileana's life these days involves the ending of her long relationship with Castelli. "It's difficult for me to talk about Leo," she said, during our lunch at Da Silvano. "He was my oldest friend, you know, and we had so many, many memories in common."

ILEANA was seventeen when she and Leo met, in Bucharest in 1932. She describes herself at that age as a spoiled, absurdly sheltered, inwardly rebellious heiress who "had a governess until I had a fiancé." Her father, Mihail Schapira, was one of the richest men in Romania—a self-made Jewish industrialist, who showered luxuries on his Austrian-born wife and their two daughters. When Leo Castelli arrived in Bucharest, from Trieste, in the spring of 1932, to work for an Italian insurance firm, he met and promptly fell in love with Ileana's older sister, Eve, who was already married. Ileana was introduced to Castelli a few weeks later, at a dinner party. "I sat across the table from him, thinking, He's not so scary, he looks quite possible," she recalls. Castelli had grown up in Trieste. He was the son of a Hungarian Jewish banker named Ernest Krauss, who, for business reasons, had adopted his Italian-born wife's family name. Leo was twenty-four then, an intelligent and ambitious dandy with elegant manners and a knack for enjoying life. Ileana's lifelong rivalry with Eve, who was the more beautiful sister, made it all the more thrilling when his attention turned in her direction, yet Ileana makes it clear that theirs was no great love match. "I desperately wanted to get away from home," she recalls. "Leo was on the move. He was going to get out of Romania and I was going to get out, too, so I married him."

Their wedding trip, the following October, was to Vienna, a city Ileana had long adored. She had become interested in art, as a child, at the Kunsthistorisches Museum there; she liked looking at the Titians and the Velázquezes and the Dutch masters so much that when she was seven or eight her mother and Eve used to drop her off at the museum for hours at a time, alone, while they shopped for clothes. Instead of a diamond ring, Ileana asked Leo to give her a painting as a wedding present. In Vienna, they picked out a Matisse watercolor, which she remembers as "really pretty and really small."



"EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEK! Oh, it's only you."

The newlyweds moved into one of the first modern apartment buildings in Bucharest, and furnished it with old pieces they found by driving out into the country on weekends and buying directly from farm families. But Castelli was bored by the insurance business, and the spreading cancer of anti-Semitism, which metastasized rapidly in Eastern Europe after Hitler's rise to power, in 1933, made life increasingly disagreeable both for him and for his wealthy in-laws. In 1936, the Castellis moved, with their newborn daughter, Nina, to Paris, where Leo's father had arranged a job for him at a branch of the Banca d'Italia. Ileana's father set them up in an Art Deco apartment in Neuilly, with an Italian chauffeur, two maids, a cook, a laundress, and a baby nurse. Ileana was not particularly happy in Paris, though, because Leo, as bored with banking as he had been with insurance, devoted a lot of his energy to romantic dalliances. She tried to be philosophical about it, but for a while in 1938 she made Leo move out of their apartment. Ileana took no part in a gallery that Leo and his friend René Drouin, the architect and interior designer who had remodelled their Neuilly flat, decided to open in 1939, on the Place Vendôme. The gallery was to be a showcase for furniture designed by Drouin, but the Surrealist artist Léonor Fini, whom Castelli had known as a child in Trieste, became involved in the planning, and the opening show that spring turned into a Surrealist event, with fantastic chairs, chiffoniers, and other pieces designed by Fini, Eugene Berman, and Meret Oppenheim. The show was a great success, but the gallery closed for the summer, and that was that—the war broke out in September. After many anxious months, and with funds provided by Mihail Schapira, who had moved to New York, the Castelli family made its way there in 1941, travelling via North Africa, Spain, and Cuba with Nina's English nanny, Ileana's longhaired dachshund, Noodle, and twenty-two pieces of luggage.

Schapira lost most of his money in the war, but he had brought enough out of Europe to make some business investments and to buy a town house at 4 East Seventy-seventh Street. Leo and Ileana occupied its fourth floor. When Leo went into the United States Army, in 1943 (he served three years with an intelligence unit, and ended up as an interpreter in Bucharest), Ileana enrolled at Columbia University, mainly as a way of improving her English. She signed up for several courses. In one of them—a French-literature course on Proust—the only student besides her who knew French was a bright, talkative, and, in Ileana's eyes, "totally bohemian" American named Michael Sonnabend. Like many Columbia students in those years, they were both considerably older than the peacetime norm: Ileana was thirty and Michael was forty-four. He told their French teacher that he was a refugee. "Where are you a refugee from?" Ileana asked him after class. "From Buffalo," he said. In spite of her shyness, they became friends.

Castelli's Army service had made him an American citizen, and when he came back after the war he and Ileana knew that they wanted to stay in New York. Her ever-accommodating father bought Leo a part interest in a knitwear firm, but Leo, as usual, found office life boring. He became a private art dealer on the side, selling modern paintings sent over on consignment from Paris by René Drouin. Leo's womanizing had not abated, and Ileana was often depressed. The strongest bond in their marriage at this point was a growing interest in contemporary art. At Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century Gallery, on Fifty-seventh Street, they saw paintings by Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, and other New York artists who were forging the new art of Abstract Expressionism. The Castellis didn't buy this work at first, but they met most of the artists, and they gravitated increasingly toward what was then a very limited milieu of people interested in advanced art.

EACH summer, several New York artists moved out to the east end of Long Island, where one could still find inexpensive rentals. Robert Motherwell owned a place in East Hampton, and he told Leo about a big shingled house for sale across the street from his, on Jericho Lane. "It was ten thousand dollars, so we bought it," Ileana recalls. "A very romantic old house, like a Russian dacha, with roses and porches and wonderful views of the sea beyond the potato fields." On weekends, the house's many rooms were usually occupied by the Castellis' new artist friends. Willem and Elaine de Kooning spent two summers there, painting every day but taking time out for trips to the Coast Guard Beach. Jackson Pollock dropped by frequently; once, roaring out of the driveway in his secondhand Cadillac, he knocked over a sculpture that Larry Rivers had given to Leo. ("That's one way to deal with the younger generation," the painter Paul Brach observed.) To most of the art crowd out there, Ileana seemed to be very much in the background. She didn't drink, for one thing—an experimental drug she was taking for depression had given her a bad case of hepatitis, and her doctor had ruled out alcohol in any form. "Besides, Leo was the one they knew," Ileana says. "I was only the wife, and I didn't dare express my opinion on anything." (Not entirely true, one gathers; Castelli once described Ileana as "a strong personality who makes you think she needs protection.") Several of Leo's friends found Ileana narcissistic and self-absorbed, especially in relation to her daughter, Nina. "I was a bad mother," Ileana concedes today. "Nina and I are very close now, and have been for the last ten years. But she had a nanny who stayed much too long, and I was somewhat displaced. If I scolded Nina, Leo would take her side." It was clear, however, that Ileana ran the household, and that the money required to run it was hers.

Besides the de Koonings, there was another permanent guest in the East Hampton house: Michael Sonnabend, Ileana's "bohemian" classmate at Columbia. Just over five feet tall and endlessly articulate, Michael had done many things in the past—guided tourists in Paris, worked as a receptionist at the Group Theatre's office in New York, made a documentary film on Michelangelo—but now his principal occupation seemed to be reading Dante. He had taught himself Italian so he could read it in the original, and his life's ambition was to memorize the entire Divine Comedy. "Nobody thought there was anything going on between Ileana and Michael," according to Paul Brach. "Leo was always perfectly accepting of Michael, who seemed asexual, as Ileana's special friend."

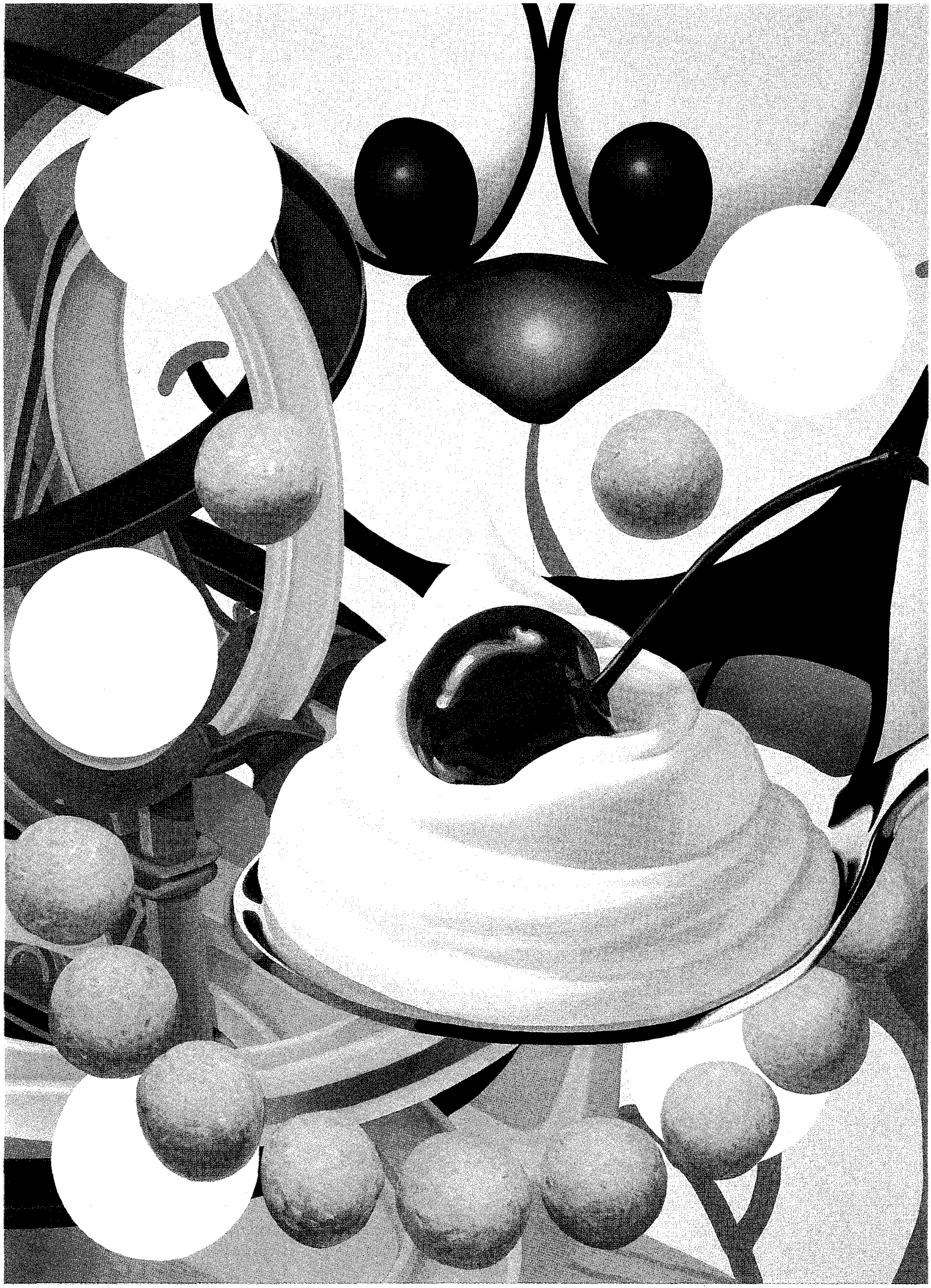
De Kooning kept telling Leo he should start a gallery. Leo had sold his interest in the knitwear firm, and he was using the proceeds to buy and sell paintings. Ileana was also buying things: a Léger, two Dubuffets, several Pollocks. One summer afternoon on the beach at East Hampton, de Kooning started to harangue Leo again about opening a gallery, and for once Ileana spoke up. "I think that Leo will open a gallery," she said, "and that you won't be one of his artists." De Kooning wanted to know why not. Ileana explained that she thought Leo would want to be involved with what was coming up, not with what was already established.

THE Castelli Gallery opened in February, 1957, in the living room of Leo and Ileana's apartment at 4 East Seventy-seventh Street, with a group show of paintings by Mondrian, Picabia, Dubuffet, Léger, Pollock, de Kooning, and other established Europeans and Americans, most of which Leo had acquired as a private dealer. No new ground was broken there, or in Castelli's next few shows, which featured Paul Brach, Jon Schueler, and some younger European artists, but the season-ending group show of "New Work" that May included two paintings that struck a different note. One was by Robert Rauschenberg, the other by Jasper Johns.

Rauschenberg, a thirty-one-year-old Texan, had been troubling the New York art world for several years with his high-spirited assaults on the barriers between art and life. A 1954 show of predominantly red paintings at the Egan Gallery—paintings that incorporated mirrors, flattened umbrellas, comic strips, reproductions of Old Master paintings, torn fabrics, and blinking light bulbs as collage elements—had struck Castelli as "an epiphany, an astonishing event." A second and even more compelling epiphany overtook Castelli when he saw his first painting by the twenty-seven-year-old Jasper Johns, in a 1957 group show at the Jewish Museum. It was a green collage-painting that looked like a target, with concentric circles, and it was done in encaustic—an archaic technique using wax-based pigment. Ileana was sick with the flu that day, and she remembers Leo sitting on the end of her bed and talking for quite a while about it.

Two days later, they went down to

COURTESY JEFF KOONS AND SONNABEND GALLERY, NEW YORK



"Loopy" (1999), by Jeff Koons, one of the four artists in the 1986 Sonnabend show that ushered in the "neo-geo" movement.

Rauschenberg's studio, on Pearl Street, to look at his work. Ileana had been intrigued by Rauschenberg ever since she first met him, at the "Ninth Street Show," a 1951 group exhibition financed largely by Castelli. ("Who is that young prince?" she had asked Leo.) Now, seeing the new collages and "combine-paintings"—Rauschenberg's term for works that incorporated scrap lumber, stuffed birds, an old quilt from his bed, and other objects from the real world—both she and Leo were impressed. "But then Bob said he was going downstairs to Jasper's loft to get ice for drinks," Ileana recalls. "It turned out that Jasper Johns lived in the studio on the floor beneath, and they had only one refrigerator between them." Leo, suddenly very excited, said he wanted to meet Johns, so they all went downstairs to his studio, where, to Ileana's amazement, they saw what looked like a formal exhibition: "Many, many marvellous paintings—paintings of targets, of flags, of numbers, all very strange and very beautiful. We were overwhelmed." Ileana bought one of the white number paintings on the spot, and Leo told Johns he wanted to give him a show. "What about Bob?" Johns inquired—a question that went unanswered. Neither of the Castellis realized how crushing their visit had been for Rauschenberg. He had seemed delighted by their reactions to his friend's work, but a few days later he came by the gallery and told Ileana (Leo was out at the time) that he had to know whether or not they planned to offer him a show. Without hesitation, Ileana said that they did, and gave him a date for the following March. Would Leo have done the same? "I think Leo had decided to show the work," Ileana told me, tactfully and a bit evasively. It was Ileana, at any rate, who said yes to Rauschenberg.

Jasper Johns's first one-man show opened at the Castelli Gallery in January of 1958, and changed the direction of contemporary art. *ARTnews,* the most influential art monthly, had already put Johns's "Target with Four Faces" on its cover. Alfred Barr came to the opening, stayed for three hours, and bought three pictures for the Museum of Modern Art. All but two paintings were sold, and countless artists and collectors realized that there was an alternative to the Abstract Expressionist juggernaut. The Rauschenberg show, two months later, was not nearly as successful commercially: only two paintings were sold, and Castelli bought one of them. (It was "Bed," the piece incorporating the artist's quilt.) But MOMA put both Johns and Rauschenberg in its touring "Sixteen Americans" show in 1959, and the Castelli Gallery became, within its second season, the main launching pad for new American art.

The Castellis' marriage, meanwhile, was coming apart. For years, Ileana had been "trying very hard to get over Leo's escapades," as she puts it. "I had decided that there must be an understanding, and I didn't want to take it out on the girls, because I didn't think they were at fault." But one morning, infuriated by Leo's involvement with Toiny du Bost, she threw all the breakfast dishes on the floor and walked out. Most of the couple's friends agree that Leo, who dreaded confrontations, would never have ended the marriage on his own. Even after they were divorced, in 1959, he continued to consult her on art and artists. (And on other matters as well: before marrying Toiny, in 1963, he flew to Paris to tell Ileana. "My opinion didn't count that time," she dryly notes.) Leo asked her to visit the studios of Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol in 1961, when he was trying to decide between them. Both artists happened to be working just then with images taken

FROM A LECTURE DELIVERED IN A CROSSWIND

Safe from ravelling tapestries of light,
cars gather in the parking lot.

Robes filled with faintly seen professors
hesitate in the wind.

While overhead, the ripple that ships make
is of geese going east.
There's no photograph, no proof of this.

I praise the front of the speaker's uniform,
the place with the Crimean ribbons.
He tells how the tents were hit,
how wrinkles were stretched smooth.
It took a long time to triumph, he said.
Whose side in fact had lost?
Ignorance reddens at the mention of itself.

Where the sawmill howls again
the owls go further inland,
housewives
pat their plush cheeses;
such a long time it takes to acquire riches!
Perhaps it is not inevitable.

Something bulges on the horizon,
bystanders fall back in awe, a gasp goes up,
as if this moment would be lost if not written
down.

Harsh stars, perhaps not the last of their kind,
shine in the wind, and
there's a great blue urgency off our shores,
a sense of sapphire.

—Lois Moyles

from comic strips. Ileana urged Leo to take both of them, but Leo, feeling that Warhol's paintings were not as good, opted for Lichtenstein. (Warhol would join the gallery three years later.) Leo also wanted Ileana to confirm his choices of Frank Stella, Cy Twombly, and several others. All this presented problems, because Toiny, who had not yet married Leo, was frantically jealous. Toiny used to call up Ileana and warn her to stay away from Leo. "I think that Leo in the beginning wasn't quite sure of himself," Ileana said, "so he liked to talk things over with me. Eventually, he accepted the role—he knew what the role should be—and then he grew into it."

Ileana was too involved with contemporary art to consider giving it up. For several years, she had been visiting artists' studios, looking at new work, and occasionally buying what baffled or excited her: Lichtenstein drawings, Warhol silk screens, key early paintings and drawings by Johns, and a number of aggressively challenging Rauschenbergs, including "Charlene," "Hymnal," "Rhyme," "Interior," "Odalisk," and "Canyon." A few years later, she also bought, from Castelli, one of the early black paintings that made Frank Stella famous; Ileana's was called "Point of Pines," and it became the source of a public dispute with Castelli. According to Ileana, Leo called her, saying that Stella needed to see the painting in his own studio—temporarily, she assumed—so she sent it to him, and never got it back. She hired a lawyer and eventually filed suit, but then, "to save Leo embarrassment," she agreed to an out-of-court settlement, under which Stella, who kept "Point of Pines," agreed to give Ileana a number of his later works in exchange. "Even now," she said recently, "Stella is afraid to face me." Stella's recollection, needless to say, is a little different. "Leo sold that painting to Ileana without my permission, for a price that was very beneficial to her," Stella told me. "I don't know why I had to give her anything."

IN 1960, Ileana married Michael Sonnabend. (She proposed to him, according to Michael.) Neither of them felt any great urge to stay in New York at this point. Nina had graduated from N.Y.U., married a graduate student named Michael Sundell, and gone to live in Cleveland. Soon after their marriage, at any rate, the Sonnabends moved to Europe, with the idea of organizing shows of the new American art. In Rome, where they went first, a few galleries expressed interest, but nobody wanted to pay the costs of insuring and bringing over works by Rauschenberg, Johns, Lichtenstein, and the others. It was the same story in Paris a year later, when they moved there. Apparently, the only solution was to open a gallery themselves, and so, with Michael's encouragement and a few thousand dollars that Ileana had in reserve, they rented a small room on the Quai des Grands-Augustins, directly above a fashionable restaurant called the Relais Bisson.

Ileana's gallery opened in November, 1962, with a show of paintings by Jasper Johns. Rauschenberg came next, early in 1963, and was followed by Jim Dine, Roy Lichtenstein, George Segal, and two group shows of American Pop art. The shows were well attended; the critical reaction was generally hostile. Alain Jouffroy and Jean-Jacques Lebel, two young French critics who had been very encouraging at first, turned against the Sonnabends when Ileana declined to show the Surrealist artists Jouffroy and Lebel were promoting. Other critics and several dealers, angry over New York's emergence as the new center of contemporary art, accused them of cultural chauvinism.

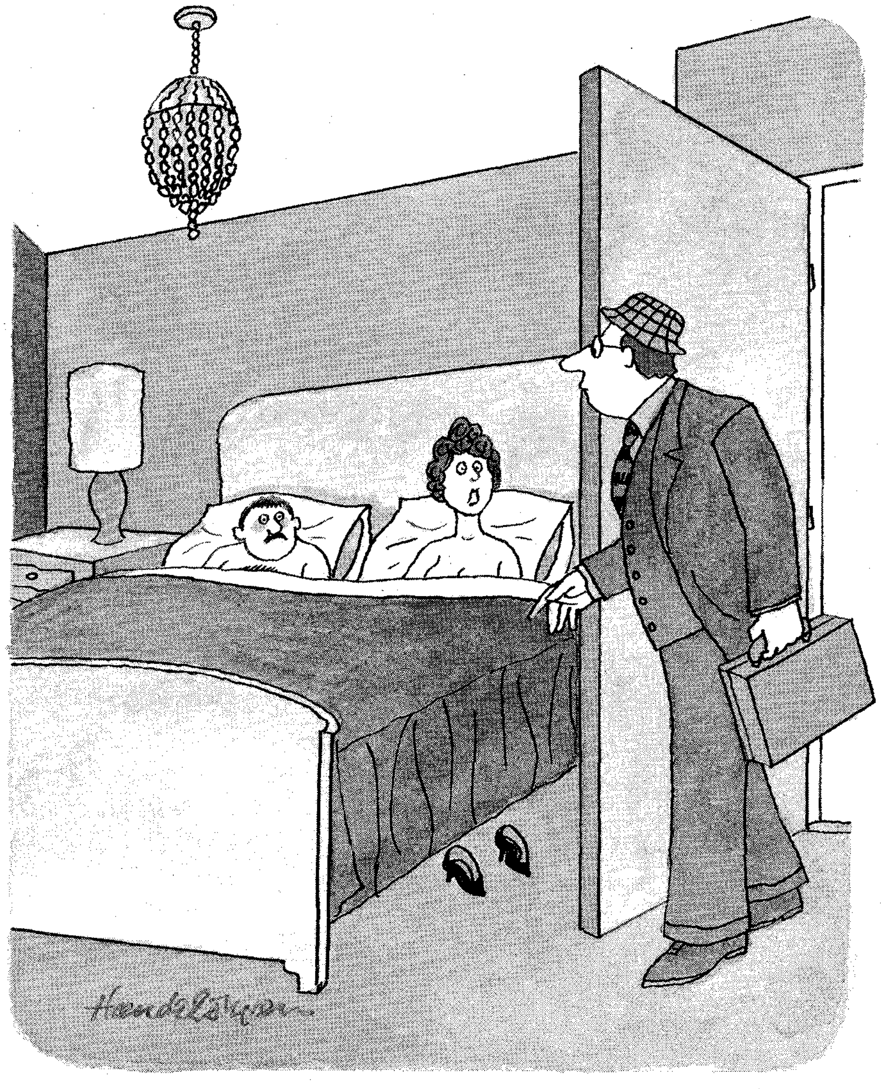
Castelli made his artists available to show with her on the most favorable terms—"ruinous terms," according to his gallery manager at the time, Ivan Karp. Castelli paid the shipping and insurance costs, he "made sure Ileana got exactly what she wanted," Karp recalls, "and there was no pressure to turn over revenue." But Ileana did not depend exclusively on Castelli artists. Claes Oldenburg, James Rosenquist, and George Segal were showing then with Richard Bellamy's Green Gallery in New York, and Jim Dine, who became her best-selling artist, was with Martha Jackson. Ileana ran the gallery, and Michael talked. He talked to everyone who came in, advancing acrobatic theories about the art on view to artists and students and critics and museum curators, more and more of whom flocked to Sonnabend to find out about the latest developments in New York. Behind the scenes, Michael encouraged Ileana to be tougher and more daring. "Michael was an enormous catalyst for Ileana," according to Antonio Homem, a reed-thin, voluble Portuguese engineering graduate who went to work for the Sonnabends in Paris in 1968. (He took the job after his wife, who had had it

"Oh God, I forgot to ask if anybody had lard issues."

before him, decided to leave both the gallery and the marriage, taking their two-year-old son with her.) "At the gallery, it was Michael who gave the initiative, and Ileana who acted," Antonio told me. "That's the way their relationship works."

When Rauschenberg won the international grand prize for painting at the 1964 Venice Biennale—something no American artist had done before—art-world gossip implicated Leo Castelli: his devious political maneuverings, it was said, had influenced the jury. Leo and Toiny had been in Venice for a week before the vernissage, to be sure, holding court every afternoon at a table at Florian's, while Ileana and Michael presided over a table of their own nearby. But the groundswell of enthusiasm for Rauschenberg in Europe really originated with the shows that Ileana gave him in Paris, and other shows that she arranged for him at several European galleries. In 1962, just before she left New York for Paris, Rauschenberg had given her an intensely personal good-luck charm—a partially sucked Life Saver, which he encased in soft metal, and which she wore on a chain around her neck for many years. "The Life Saver means what it means," Rauschenberg told me not long ago, and it was intended to work both ways. "It became an icon of our friendship, beyond the call of duty."

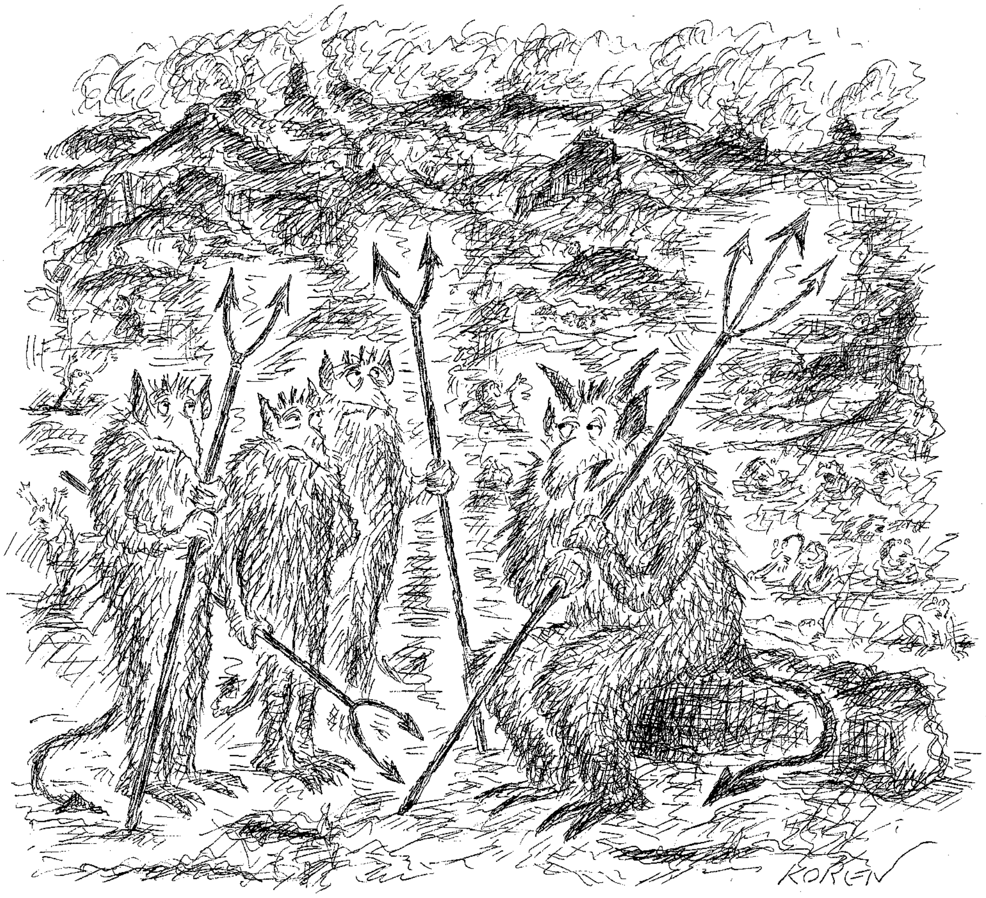
As Leo Castelli's wife, Ileana had been a largely silent partner, but in Paris, where the attitude toward women in business was even more patronizing than it was in New York, she developed a reputation for being blunt, outspoken, and "difficult." When the art critic of *Paris Match* came to the gallery one day and spoke condescendingly about the art there, Ileana ordered him to leave. *("Dehors!")* Away from the gallery, Ileana was still fairly reclusive. She and Michael would show up most evenings at the Café de Flore, with their dog, a longhaired dachshund named Piccina (one of Noodle's successors), but when Michael went off to the theatre afterward, as he often did, Ileana went home to their extremely modest flat, next door to the gallery, on the Quai des Grands-Augustins, and read a book. Implausibly, she took up knitting, and made sweaters for Michael, Antonio, and certain close friends. Ileana and Michael travelled a lot, going to Venice in the summer, and spending time in museums. Later on, she discovered the opera, which she enjoyed greatly but selectively—Lully, Mozart, some Verdi, most of Wagner, but definitely not Puccini (too sentimental). Ileana took pleasure in the sensual and aesthetic aspects of life, but she remained, as Judith Goldman, who is writing Castelli's biography, once put it, like a Jasper Johns painting, "full of doors that open and shut."



"'In flagrante delicto,' indeed! You never miss an opportunity to show off your classical education, do you?"

NOW in her early fifties, Ileana felt increasingly inclined to embrace risk and adventure. She showed American Pop art, minimal art, conceptual art, and, a little later, video and dance and performance art. She also took on a number of European artists, and developed a network of European collectors. Ileana was much tougher to deal with than Castelli. She drove hard bargains, pitting one buyer against another and sometimes playing games with clients. She told a client that a Johns painting was "not for you," and coolly informed another, who had asked if she knew who he was, "Yes, I do, and the price will be a little higher." She could be coquettish in business dealings. Now and then, when a collector pressed her to sell a painting, she would murmur, "Tempt me." She had what one of her artists, Mel Bochner, called "the mentality of a seductress."

The Galerie Sonnabend in Paris never made money, even after it moved, in 1966, to larger quarters on the Rue Mazarine and became a meeting place for everyone interested in advanced art. Ileana tried opening a second gallery, in Geneva, but the European market for new art dried up almost completely in 1968, in the political turmoil



"It's getting much harder for me to distinguish good from evil. All I'm certain about is what's appropriate and what's inappropriate."

following the student insurrections, and Michael Sonnabend began to argue for a return to New York. Ileana kept the Paris gallery going until 1980, but, from the mid-seventies, the New York gallery was her center of operations.

She opened uptown in 1970, at 924 Madison Avenue. SoHo, the downtown industrial district south of Houston Street, was starting to become a new center for contemporary-art galleries, however, and Leo Castelli had bought an interest in a building at 420 West Broadway. André Emmerich was taking the fifth floor there, John Weber the fourth, and Castelli claimed the second and persuaded Ileana to move into the third. The opening of all four galleries on the same day (September 25, 1971) marked SoHo's real début as a major art center, and the main event was Gilbert and George's "The Singing Sculpture," at Sonnabend. Gilbert and George were two youngish Britons who, in identical tight suits, their faces and hands painted bronze, stood on a small table in the middle of the gallery and, with stylized gestures and no expression whatsoever, sang the words to an endlessly repeated tape of a nineteen-thirties British music-hall ditty called "Underneath the Arches." In the highly chauvinistic art world of those days, the message was that New York's monopoly on outrageous innovation was up for grabs.

Some art galleries have a clear and specific direction in the art they show. Ileana's never did; her range of interests was too wide and unpredictable. Asked once what motivated her as a dealer and a collector, Ileana answered, "Curiosity and greed." She was drawn to work that she found troubling, or even upsetting. As a result, she showed and often bought art that seemed incomprehensible at the time, but which later came to be recognized as the artist's best work. "I only want what I don't like," she said, half jokingly. What she wanted above all was to be surprised. Vito Acconci managed that with "Seedbed," his first show at the SoHo gallery, in 1972. He built a wooden ramp at one end of the gallery, under which, concealed from view, he masturbated at intervals during the show's two-week run, his sighs and mumbled fantasies made audible to gallerygoers through loudspeakers. (When Ileana was told what he planned to do—she was in Venice at the time—her only concern was that he might hurt himself.) The plan had been that Michael Sonnabend would run the New York gallery and Ileana would spend about half her time in Paris, but running things was not Michael's strong point. Ileana and Antonio oversaw both the New York and the Paris galleries, commuting between them; they hired younger people to direct the day-to-day operations, and Michael kept an advisory role. In the choice of new artists, his opinion was sometimes decisive. Ileana and Antonio were uncertain about David Salle, for example, but Michael didn't like his work, and Salle went elsewhere—first to Annina Nosei, then to Mary Boone, and, more recently, to Gagosian.

In New York, Ileana showed the European artists she had discovered in Paris—Mario Merz, Jannis Kounellis, Pier Paolo Calzolari, and others, whose use of throwaway, non-art materials became known as Arte Povera. She showed photographs and photo-based work, and conceptual work, and (at the uptown gallery, which she kept running until 1973) the Art Deco furniture and decorative objects she had collected in Paris, because they appealed to her as sculpture. Advanced art in the seventies was anti-painting and, in some ways, anti-buyer. "We were all being wonderfully sanctimonious about the fact that there was nothing to sell," according to Ealan Wingate, the droll young man whom Ileana had engaged to manage the SoHo gallery.

In the early eighties, Ileana was one of the first to present the new German art in New York, showing Georg Baselitz, Jörg Immendorf, and A. R. Penck. She bought out Anselm Kiefer's studio at one point—around twenty paintings—but then Kiefer disappointed her by going to the Marian Goodman Gallery. In 1986, when four ambitious young American artists who had been presenting their own work in an East Village gallery called International with Monument decided that they wanted to enter the big time, it was the Sonnabend Gallery they chose. They liked its historical resonance and the fact that it was not overburdened with famous artists. Ileana's group show of those four—Ashley Bickerton, Peter Halley, Meyer Vaisman, and Jeff Koons—ushered in the "neo-geo" movement, and precipitated its move from the lively but precarious East Village galleries to SoHo. Ileana's New York gallery may have lacked the superstar panache of Castelli's, one floor below, but her shows were striking, thought-provoking, not to be missed. "I always liked the no-nonsense, almost clinical look of her gallery," Larry Gagosian, today's highest-riding dealer, said recently. "The way she presented things, they always looked important, even when they weren't."

Although quite a few artists have stayed with Ileana since the nineteen-seventies, many others have left her, sometimes with deep regret. Jim Dine was one of the first to go, in 1975. Like most Sonnabend artists, Dine couldn't fathom Ileana's byzantine accounting methods. "I never saw a statement," he said. "If you asked her for money, she would pull out this wad of bills in every possible currency, and peel off a few. The reason I left her gallery, finally, was that I had kids growing up, and I had to have more money, so I went to Pace. There were no hard feelings. I loved her—I still love her. I've never known anyone who had more feeling for my work. She always made me feel there were more possibilities for it."

Some artists found her manipulative and controlling. Ileana wasn't keen on letting her artists show at other galleries, as Leo did. "She wanted to keep control over my entire output," says Meyer Vaisman, who hasn't shown with Sonnabend since 1992. "I felt that Ileana came first, second, third, fourth, and fifth, then came Antonio, then the collectors, and eventually the artist." Peter Halley's defection to the Gagosian Gallery was accompanied by bad feelings and a legal skirmish. William Wegman reports that soon after a fire destroyed his studio—and everything in it—Ileana told him she was reducing his stipend. Wegman went on to have great success with Holly Solomon; he is on good terms with Ileana today, but at the time he found it startling that a dealer could be more difficult than an artist. Jeff Koons left the gallery in 1992, because Ileana balked at his endlessly escalating financial needs, but he recently started to work with her again.

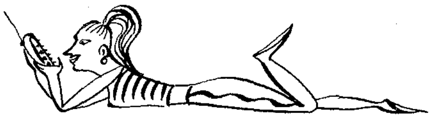
When Ileana feels betrayed by artists or associates, she is unforgiving. She has stopped speaking to Ealan Wingate and Robert Pincus-Witten, both of whom worked for her in the past, because they went on to work for Gagosian and (she believes) lured artists to leave her gallery for his. Ileana never turned against Leo Castelli, though, and in many ways she and Leo remained closer to each other than to anyone else. The deep affection between them was based, as such bonds often are, on their being so different in most ways and yet so alike in others. "You know," Ileana said jokingly to Leo, some years ago, "both of us are such adolescents." "That's true," Leo agreed, "and nobody knows it but us." A few months before Leo's death, I asked Ileana whether she remembered that exchange, and she said she did. We were having lunch with Antonio Homem and Michael Sonnabend, who commented that he still thought of Leo Castelli as a child. "Somebody must take care of him, always," he said. "Ileana is not a child, she's a mother."

"No, no, no," protested Antonio. "Ileana is a child, Michael, and so are you. I'm the only mother in this family."

"Ileana is the boss," Michael said. "Everything she does surprises me."

"Thank you," Ileana murmured. "That's very nice."

NINA SUNDELL, Ileana and Leo's daughter, told me that, as far as she knows, Ileana has made no arrangements for the future disposition of her vast collection. The Baltimore Museum of Art, where many of her paintings and sculptures have been on loan for several years, obviously has its hopes, and so does the Museum of Modern Art, which has been angling for several years to buy things from her—MOMA would particularly like to get Rauschenberg's "Canyon," an early combine-painting whose main collage element is a large stuffed eagle—but Ileana has yet to be tempted. Recently, she hinted that the collection might end up at Sotheby's or Christie's. "What about 'Canyon'? " I asked her. "Well," she said, laughing, "if they build a pyramid for me when I die, I would like it in there with me."



A few years back, Leo Castelli agreed to sell Rauschenberg's "Bed" to MOMA. A meeting was called to discuss the price, which, judging from recent auction and private sales of the artist's work, was expected to be in the millions, but Castelli stopped the proceedings short by reminding everyone that he had promised, long ago, to donate the work to the museum. "I said I would give it," he announced, "and I will give it." This sort of grand gesture, so characteristic of Leo, did not impress Ileana. "I thought it was crazy," she told me. "It certainly would not have been my choice. Of course, he did well for the painting. But, you know, I am not so enchanted with museums. Things change in museums, directors change. I would much rather sell to collectors, who appreciate what they've got."

In 1998, she did sell her two very important early Jasper Johns paintings, "Gray Target" and "Flag Above White," for what was reported to be twenty million dollars. S. I. Newhouse, Jr., the collector and publisher (of this magazine, among others), was the buyer; he kept "Gray Target" for himself and arranged for David Geffen, the entertainment mogul, to buy "Flag Above White." Newhouse had to wait five months before Ileana agreed to his offer. "I was unhappy to part with them," Ileana told me, "but I thought it would be nice to have some security. It happened because I realized my age. Usually I am unconscious of my age, but once in a while I remember, and then I wonder what I'm doing." She gave a slightly mischievous smile, and sipped her *caffè macchiato*. "In my life," she said, "I've been doing pretty much what I wanted to do, and I go on." ♦

NAPLES POSTCARD

THE BEST OF THE WORSTED

Why the old art of the tailor is still found in modern Naples.

BY MICHAEL SPECTER

NAPLES is nothing like other Italian cities. It lacks both the mannered elegance of Florence and the fervor of Milan. It is sumptuous, sweltering, and licentious—much as it was two hundred years ago, when the city was routinely the place where any gentleman could be found as he finished his Grand Tour. For young British men spending a few months absorbing Renaissance art and wandering among the ruins of classical antiquity, Naples was the perfect antidote: a place that venerated eating, drinking—and other pleasures sought by men of means who had done their intellectual duty and wanted a bit of fun. By 1864, however, Thomas Cook had introduced the organized tour group. It was the beginning of mass travel and the end of the Grand Tour. By then, though, the Tour had done its job, and generations of British men had become fixated on the look of the Italian aristocrat. The Oxford graduates who had turned up in the steaming Mediterranean with a trunkful of the thickest and most unsuitable worsted woollens had been amazed at the talent of Neapolitan tailors, who translated their unwearable clothes into fabrics that were lighter—not to mention far more expressive and sensual.

"The whole cult of the tailor grew here because Naples was the capital of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and you had nobility here," Ciro Paone told me one recent afternoon. Paone owns Kiton, a Neapolitan men's-clothing manufacturer that is treated, among its adherents, more as a cult than as a company. Kiton, which Paone started in 1953, makes some of the world's finest—and most expensive—clothes. If you need a vicuña overcoat, for instance, made from a rare and wild Peruvian relative of the alpaca, spun from threads so thin (12.5 microns) that they are hard to grasp, and if you have fifteen thousand dollars to spend and are willing to wait a year, you will surely want to own a Kiton. But mostly Paone and his three hundred tailors make suits, and they make them exactly as their great-great-grandfathers did: one at a time, by hand, at their own pace, and with nothing to guide them but taste.

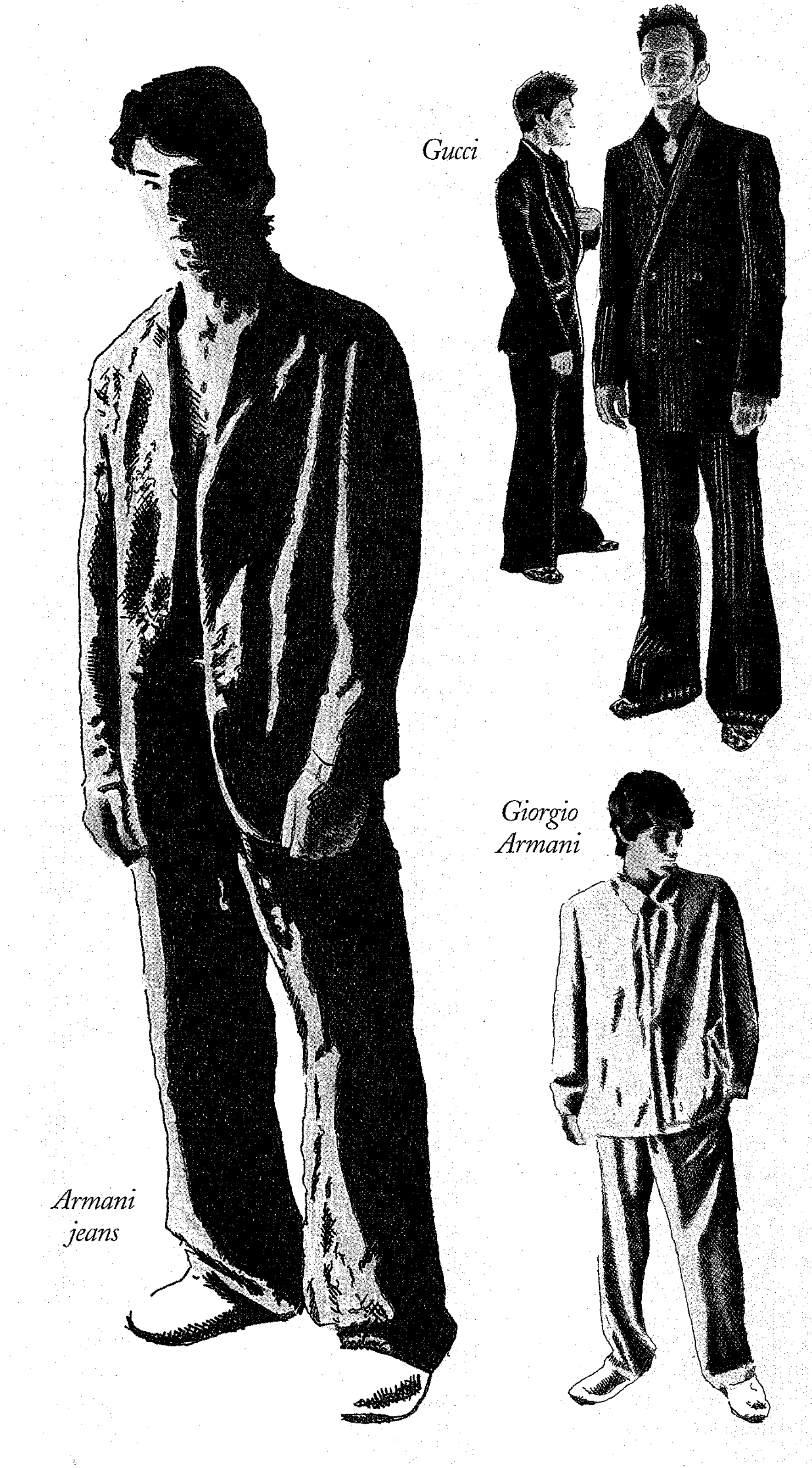
"You have to remember our history," Paone, who looks remarkably like Al Pacino, continued. He is a shortish, refined man, with wire-rimmed glasses and graying hair that is just a bit too long to be a mistake. When I met him, he was wearing a double-breasted suit cut from Kiton's finest merino wool, in a windowpane check of muted greens and charcoal grays. He had agreed to show me his factory (which includes a school for young tailors, a day-care center, and a cafeteria where the mozzarella is never more than a day old) and to talk about the way he makes a suit. "For the longest time, aristocrats in Naples did nothing at all," Paone said. "They lived off their money, and they had to waste their time somehow. To occupy themselves, they went to the barber, the shoemaker, the tailor, and, because they complained about everything, they would say, Raise this, tighten that, I want a cuff here, a ruffle there. Pull this in. Pull that out. Before you knew it, there was a whole class of people serving them, and Naples was the center of the tailor's craft. It's the class that created the *bella figura;* it's my class."

Naples remains the center of Italy's artisan culture and the home of *bella figura*, which is not just a phrase that applies to a man in a suit with pleats that don't pucker. *Bella figura* is about personal style. There is nothing ironic in the phrase—at least, not when it's said in Naples. It is always a compliment (as opposed to *brutta figura*, which is pretty much the worst thing that can be said about an Italian). But even in Naples, where people shun air-conditioning and a man would never dream of removing his suit jacket during a meal even on the hottest summer day, *bella figura* has become a difficult faith to uphold. It is no longer considered essential, for example, that a Neapolitan man wear bespoke socks; in fact, it's almost impossible to find them in the city. Still, standards have not been abandoned completely. At Marinella, perhaps the definitive Italian tie shop, located on the Riviera di Chiaia, the owner, Maurizio Marinella, still opens the doors at seven every morning, because he wants his customers to know that if they are unhappy with their clothes they can always stop by on the way to work and select a more appropriate tie.

Kiton makes about twenty thousand suits a year. (Armani can make more than that in a *week.*) And, if Paone wished to, he could make thousands more and still sell them with ease; the average price of a classic wool suit is just under five thousand dollars, though for cashmere the cost can rise to twice that. Paone chooses his textiles from a few mills in northern Italy and England. When he sees a fabric he loves, he buys all of it. "We get about three hundred or so of his suits a year," Murray Pearlstein, who owns Louis, Boston, and was Paone's first true American devotee, told me. "I wish we could have twice as many. But there is a limit to what we can buy and a limit to what they can make." Pearlstein pointed out that Kiton suits don't please everyone. Because they are not of industrial manufacture, they seem irregular; that is, no two suits are made or fit exactly alike. "It doesn't have the crispness of a commercial suit," he explained. "To the uninitiated, it looks like imperfection. But, really, it is the sign of the greatest workmanship and artistry."

In America, Kiton suits can also be bought at stores like Wilkes Bashford, in San Francisco, and Bergdorf Goodman. Don't bother trying to buy them directly from the factory, though. Paone won't sell that way. To anybody. "If I told you the names of the Americans who tried to just come here and buy suits from me you wouldn't believe it. But if a man could just stop by here it would be unfair to Bergdorf's, or to Louis, Boston. They are my customers. If you come to the factory we will take your measurements, show you our fabric, and make the suit just the way you want. But then you will have to tell us which store you want us to send it to."

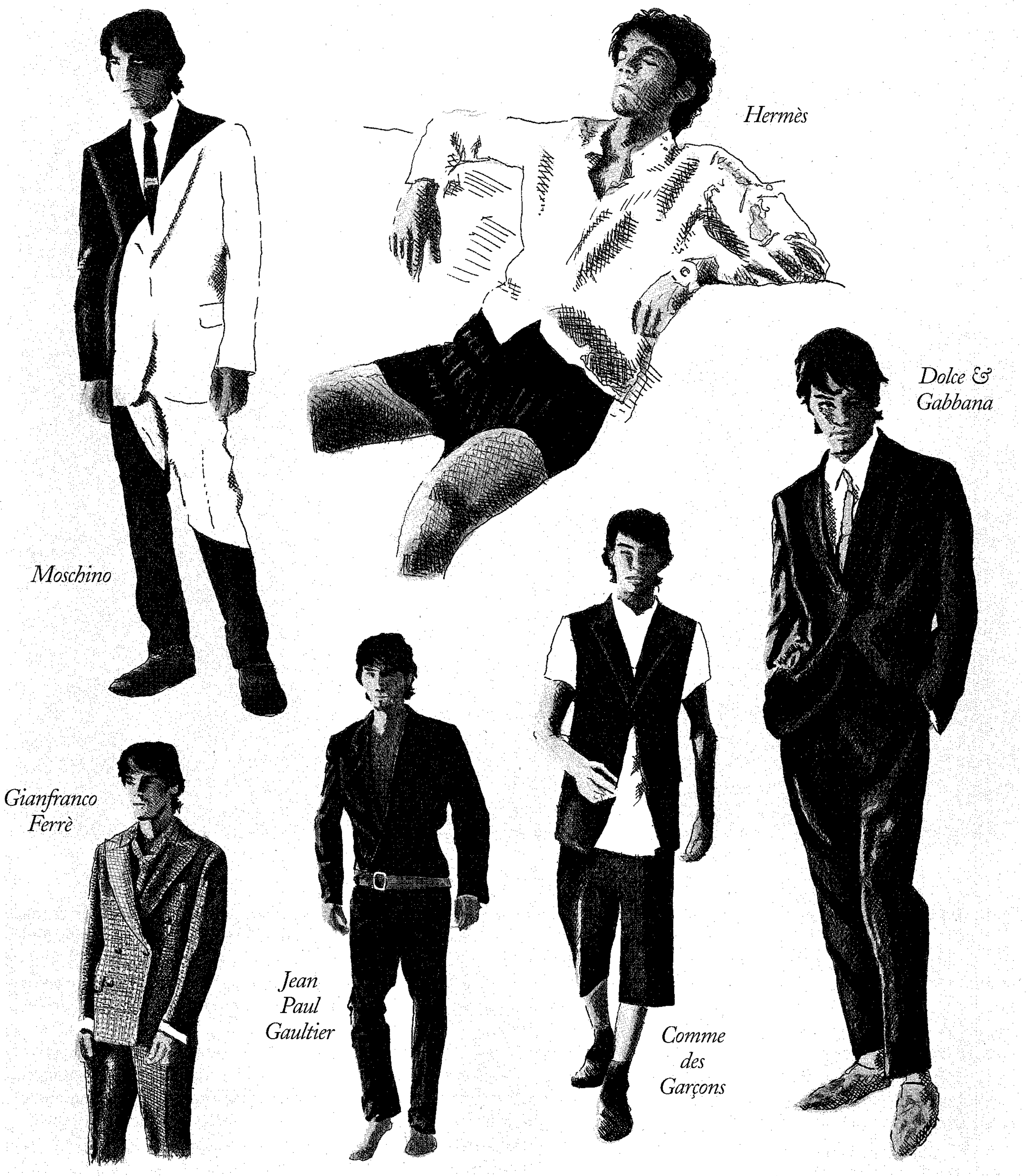
TO reach Kiton, you must drive for about twenty minutes northeast of Naples on the highway, past a string of plastics factories and truck stops, before you arrive at a garish little palazzo that looks as if it had been lifted from a Hollywood lot and deposited there by cranes. Inside, it is an unusually quiet place—more a shop than a factory, really. There are only a couple of desktop computers to keep track of customer information (Paone would never use them to make suits), and a few sewing machines—which look as if they dated back to the days before Italy was a nation. Most suits take about twenty-five hours of labor, and at least forty-five tailors contribute to every one. To press the cloth, only heavy vintage irons and local spring water are used. ("The wrong water makes the fabric stiff and unyielding," Paone told me.) The factory is organized by teams: each team, of about six tailors, sits together at a rectangular table. There is the buttonhole team, the pocket team, and the sleeve team. Kiton's buttonholes (made by the only group that included women on the day I visited) are more like embroidery than like buttonholes. The thread the tailors use is silk (from England, not Italy—Paone finds Italian silk weak). As we toured the factory, Paone was particularly eager to show me the sleeve table. Neapolitan tailors make sleeves in a special way: they gently pleat the upper part of the sleeve (where the fabric meets the armhole) and then make the opening unusually broad. The effect is called *grinze*, and it makes the jacket supple enough to mold to any man's shoulders. At Kiton, only a maestro, usually an artisan with more than twenty years' experience, is allowed to position and sew the shoulder to the sleeve.



SKETCHBOOK BY MICHAEL ROBERTS *Twenty-five years ago, Giorgio Armani knocke*

We walked by the pocket table, where five serious men were basting patches of gray cashmere to the front of a jacket. "They would all love to work on the sleeve table," Paone said to me quietly. "You have to work on buttons or pockets for at least five years, and have done very well at it, before we would ever talk about moving somebody to sleeves. Some people will never make it." I asked him if that kind of patience is easily found in Naples today.

"Of course not," he said, laughing. "Naples isn't *that* far from civilization. We have done well here. Our people earn twenty-seven per cent more than the



he stuffing out of men's suits. This season, other designers have followed his lead and offered their own wide-ranging reinterpretations.

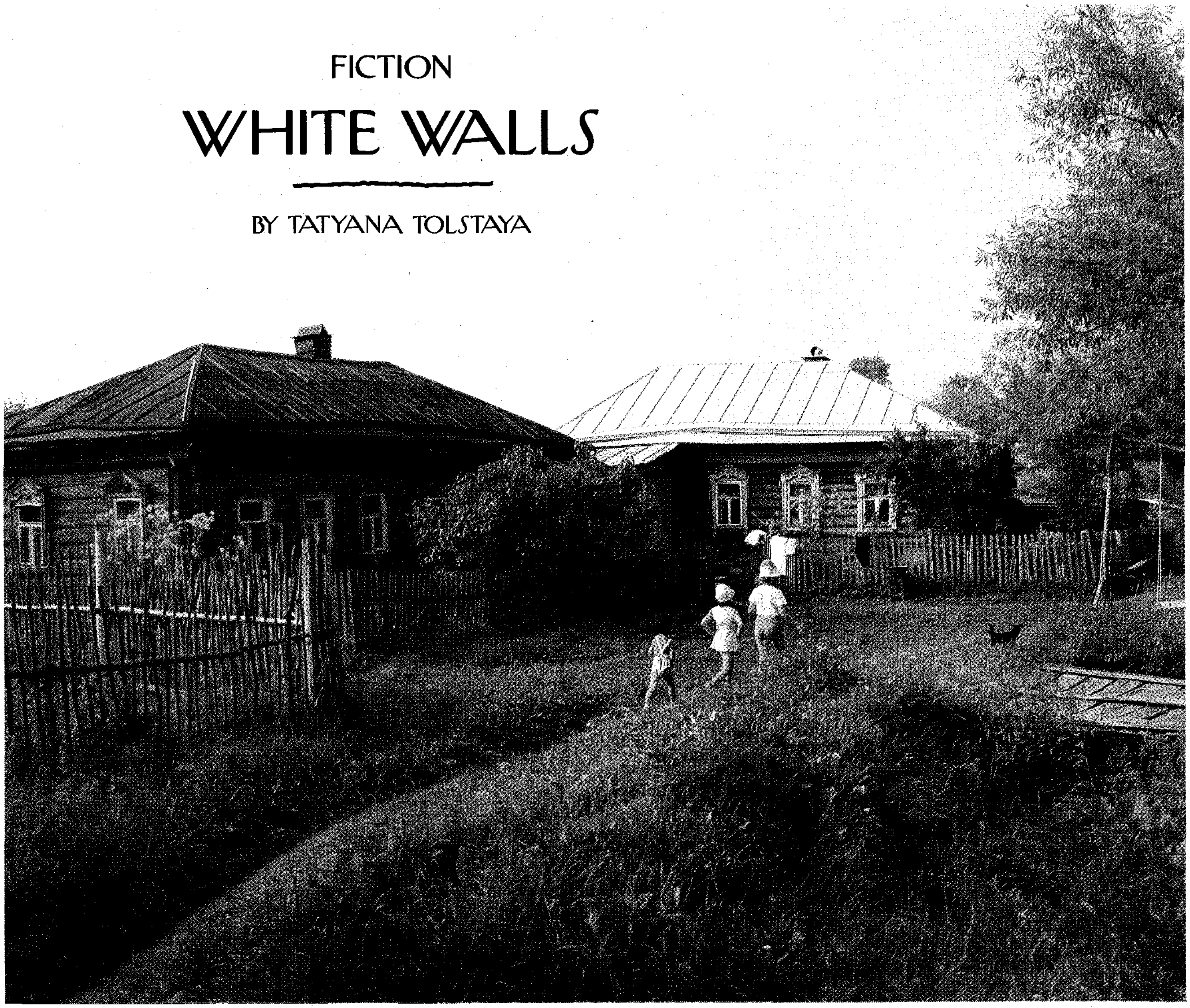
union wages. We have never had one day of *sciopero*"—or strikes, which regularly afflict every Italian industry and area of life, from factories to trains to kindergartens—"and I have never cut back or laid one person off.

"But our children don't want to do this," Paone continued. "There is the Gap and other places to buy clothes." At this point, he grabbed the lapel of my suit jacket—my best suit jacket—and examined it like a jeweller looking at a faulty gem. "It's fine for industrial," he sniffed. "It was probably made in an hour. It is just getting hard to explain to the young ones why they should have, as their highest achievement at the end of their lives, taken many, many hours to make a perfect suit." ♦

FICTION

WHITE WALLS

BY TATYANA TOLSTAYA



In 1948, Mikhail Avgustovich Janson, a pharmacist of Swedish descent, built a dacha near Leningrad to rent out to city folk for the summers. For himself, he added a little greenhouse and two small rooms over a chicken coop. He planned to live a long, happy life there, eating fresh eggs and cucumbers and selling valerian tincture made from plants that he lovingly grew with his own hands. By June, he was ready for an onslaught of tenants with trunks, children, and an unruly dog. The Lord had something else in mind, however. Janson died, and my family, the tenants, later bought the dacha from his widow.

All this was years ago. I never saw Janson, and I don't remember his widow. If you spread out our photographs in a fan of seasons and years, you could watch the Genghis Khan-like horde of my brothers and sisters multiplying madly; you could see how our dog grew old and decrepit, how Janson's cozy homestead fell apart and was overgrown with goosefoot. Where there once were chickens, you'd find seven pairs of skis and a pile of skates, and on the former site of the greenhouse you could discover my sisters and me lying in the grass, our arms flung wide, tanning our young bodies in the white satin brassieres of the Khrushchev era and flowery underpants that didn't match anything.

In 1968, my brothers and sisters and I climbed up to the attic. We found some hay that Janson had cut years before Stalin's death and an enormous trunk filled with tiny corks, with which Janson had intended to stopper his vials of valerian. There was another trunk as well, cinched with metal straps and dry to the touch; in it six pairs of huge lightweight felt boots of a sombre color had been perfectly preserved. Under the boots, in a careful pile, lay several dark dresses for a small, birdlike woman; and under the dresses, already disintegrating into molecules, was some grayish-yellow lace—you could pulverize it with your finger and scatter it on the bottom of the trunk, where time had already ground and scattered a dusty layer of some unrecognizable thing that had once belonged to someone.

In 1980, to plant strawberries, we dug up the tall weeds in the corner of the garden where, according to the old-timers, the pharmacist's Eden had once blossomed and borne fruit. At a certain depth, we unearthed a large iron object

KARI HAAVISTO, "POLENOVA, 1990"

that scared us silly. The same old-timers assured us that it wasn't a bomb, because no bombs had fallen here during the war, but, still frightened, we reburied it, packing down the earth on top of it.

When we replaced the stove, we found nothing of Janson's. Nothing again when we replaced the stovepipes. When the kitchen collapsed into the cellar and the washbasin into the chicken coop we had great hopes, but all in vain. When we patched up a huge hole the proletariat had left between the perfectly new pipe and the perfectly new stove, we found some trousers and were overjoyed, but they turned out to be our own trousers, lost so long ago that we didn't recognize them right away.

Janson had dispersed, disintegrated, vanished into the earth. His world had long since been buried under the trash of our four generations. And shockingly new children had already grown up, children who didn't remember the plaque trumpeting "M. A. Janson," which had been stolen by an admirer of nonferrous metals, children who hadn't spent hours throwing tiny corks at one another, who had never discovered the white umbrellas of stray valerian plants in the overgrowth of stinging nettles.

Two summers ago, the summer of 1997, we mistakenly calculated that our dacha was half a century old, and, in honor of the event, bought rolls of white wallpaper with green garlands. Well, we decided, in that shed where the sink is falling off the wall, where jars of dried-up linseed oil and boxes of rusty nails lie forgotten on the shelf, we will create a little Versailles. First, we'll scrape off the old green-and-white checkered wallpaper and then we'll glue our pompadour onto the bare wood. If we're going to do a real European-style renovation, then let's do it right.

But under the green and white checks there was white wallpaper with dark-blue speckles; under the speckles, a grayish spring motif with weeping-birch blossoms; under that, lilac wallpaper with embossed white roses; under the lilac, brownish-red wallpaper densely decorated with maple leaves; under the maples appeared newspapers—Oryol and Belgorod liberated and a celebratory fireworks display; under the fireworks, "the people demand the death penalty for the bloody Zinoviev-Bukharinite dogs"; and, under the dogs, a photograph of mourners in line at Lenin's funeral. Under Lenin, in a group portrait taken in Galicia, there were dashing officers, belted and thickly mustachioed, who gazed directly and anxiously at us as if they had never been plastered over with starch glue. And then, under that fraternal grave, under graves, graves, and more graves, on the very bottom, next to the wood, with a last hurrah, came "MUSTACHIN CREAM" (what else!) and "AMERICAN HIGH SOCIETY USES ONLY KOKIO LILY-OF-THE-VALLEY TEA. DUBININ TEA WAREHOUSE, MOSCOW, 51 PETROVKA STREET" and "WHY AM I SO YOUNG AND BEAUTIFUL? FREE BOOKLET BY IONACHIVARA MASAKADO" and "WHEN YOU BUY CIGARETTE PAPERS, DON'T SAY, 'GIVE ME A BOX OF GOOD PAPERS,' SAY, 'GIVE ME KATYKA PAPERS.' ONLY THEN CAN YOU BE SURE THAT YOU HAVE CIGARETTE PAPERS THAT DON'T TEAR, DON'T WRINKLE, ARE THIN AND HYGIENIC. YES, ONLY KATYKA PAPERS WILL DO."

Having started to rip and crumple, we kept on ripping and crumpling layers of time, as brittle as old glued newspapers; we tore newspapers that were as brittle as layers of time; having started to tear, we couldn't stop; from under the old paper, from under the bubbles and buckles, fell a fine wood dust, the residue deposited by the timber worms, the mice, and the bark beetles, after the weevil and its family had joyously feasted on dry starch, leaving behind a micron-size cushion of air between the strata of history, between the tectonic plates of someone else's misfortunes.

That washroom, smelling of soap and rotting boards, had been the bedroom of the pharmacist Janson. Intending to live a modest, happy, and long life there, he had lovingly pasted to its walls all the newspapers he'd kept from childhood—page after page, with nothing thrown out, nothing wasted—and, over that, his first layer of wallpaper. Meticulous and clean as he must have been, a Russified Swede, he had built himself a cozy little sleeping nest, a private corner, behind a thick door with a heavy bolt, and under the floor his own clean chickens. The little room next door, with a balcony and windows facing the sunset and the black Karelian spruce, had been his dining-living room: there he could drink a cup of coffee with chicory, sitting in a hard Lutheran armchair; there he could think about the past and the future, about how he had survived up to now, how he was going to grow medicinal herbs, and how when the first snow fell he would take a walk in his lightweight black felt boots, leaving tracks.

We tore off all the paper, everything down to the naked boards. The excitement of cleaning seized all four generations of our family, and we sandpapered and rubbed. We worked hard, careless of fingernails and scrapers. The local store, which for thirty years had got by in a complete stupor, never offering anything but rubber boots in the wrong size and hard candies called "pillows with jam," came to life in the new era and crammed the shelves with Johnson & Johnson products. What could one Janson do against two Johnsons and all the other foreigners? From abroad, there were quick-acting cleaners and spot removers—aerosols to erase memory, acids to eliminate the past. We scraped everything off: the white roses on a lilac background, the bloody dogs, the puffs of frosty breath lining up to view the revolutionary son of a public-school inspector, and the rows of tomorrow's cripples and casualties, trustingly buying round tins of the charlatan "Mustachin Cream" a week before their mutilation or death, counting on love and happiness, as had the pharmacist Janson, who bought six pairs of felt boots for future legs, now unneeded.

We scraped the boards bare, down to the faint rings on the planed wood. We let the walls dry out. Then we took a large brush, dipped it in guaranteed, sticky, synthetic glue, and, following the instructions, slathered it the right way—with no bubbles—on the back of the Versailles wallpaper. Then we pressed hard with an old cloth and rubbed the fresh wallpaper onto the fresh wall, which still smelled like the Johnsons. The glue took, and the wallpaper stuck in a passionate kiss without air.

All in all, it was a good summer near Petersburg, dry and hot. Everything dried quickly. The next morning, our wallpaper looked as if it had always hung

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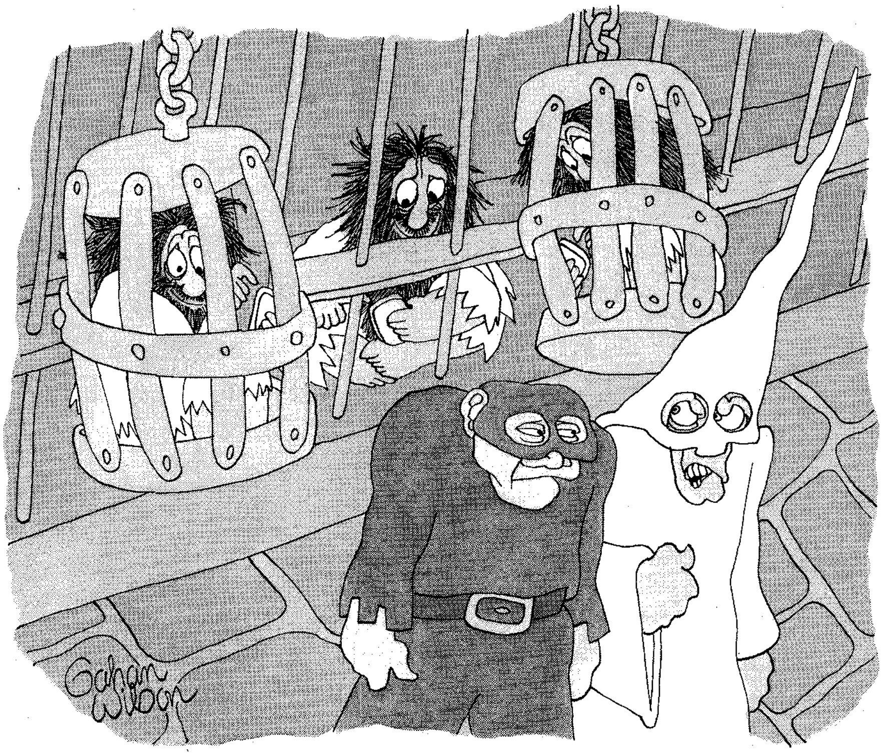
there: no dark spots, not a blotch. It wasn't so difficult after all—this tearing off and gluing on. Of course, the effect wasn't exactly palatial, and, to be honest, it wasn't the least bit European. Not that there wasn't a certain artistic quality to it, but, frankly—why beat around the bush?—it was a sorry sight. The room looked like a flowery barn. A doghouse. A shelter for Pushkin's wretched Finn, born blind. Things never seem the same on the walls as they do in small pieces, do they?

Now, we could always buy more wallpaper, plain white wallpaper with no pattern—these days you can find everything, after all—and then it would look great. Then our misguided decoration would be hidden under even, white, aristocratically indifferent, democratically neutral, benign layers of Buddhist simplicity. Plain white is straightforward and elegant. At home in the city, everyone's switching to it, and eventually I'll switch, too. White wallpaper. Or, better yet, just a paintbrush or a roller, water-based paint or plaster, and presto!—all clean. Nothing superfluous. Just welcoming white walls.

Cautiously, so as not to disturb us, like a barely perceptible shadow tiptoeing in wool socks over the new linoleum, with felt boots under his arm and a bouquet of valerian stars in his hands, with corks and vials stuffed in his bulging pockets, with the mustachioed and shaven cripples of all times in his frightened memory, Mikhail Avgustovich Janson takes his final leave. A Swede, a Lutheran, a petit bourgeois, a pharmacist, a hardworking gardener, a frugal and meticulous man, faceless, with no distinguishing marks—Mikhail Avgustovich, the heirless husband of a small wife, an inhabitant of small rooms, a discreet preserver of the forbidden past, a witness to the history we scraped off the bare walls of his former shack. Mikhail Avgustovich, about whom I know nothing and now will never know anything—other than the fact that he buried a strange iron object in the garden, hid some useless rags in the attic, covered the impermissible and unrecoverable under wallpaper in the bedroom. With my own hands, I tore the last traces of Mikhail Avgustovich from the walls that he had held onto for half a century, and, no longer needed by anyone in this new, bleached, laundered, and disinfected world, he faded, probably forever, into the grass and the leaves, into the chlorophyll, into the roots of the weeds, into the mute, unnamed, and blissful kingdom of pharmacopoeia. ♦

(Translated, from the Russian, by Jamey Gambrell.)



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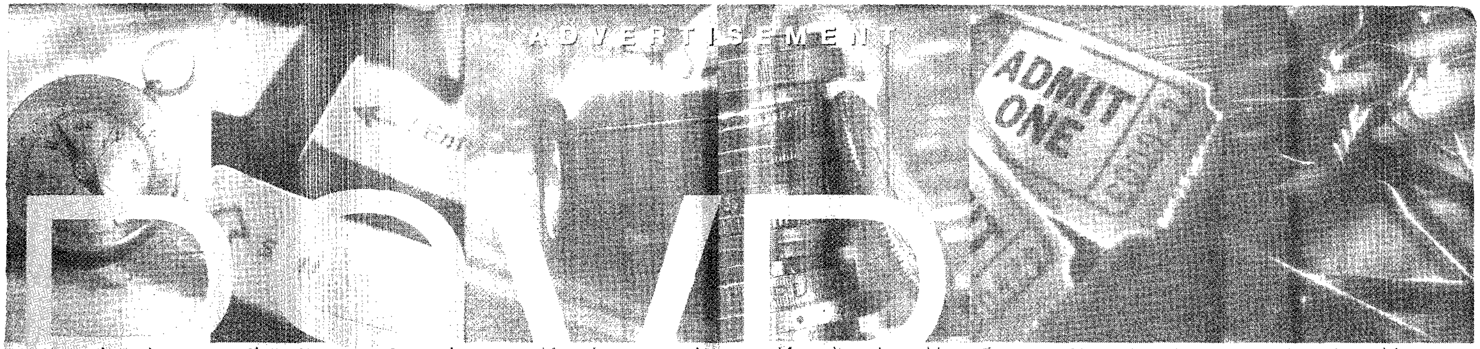

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THE CRITICS

THE SKY LINE

STAIRWAY TO THE STARS

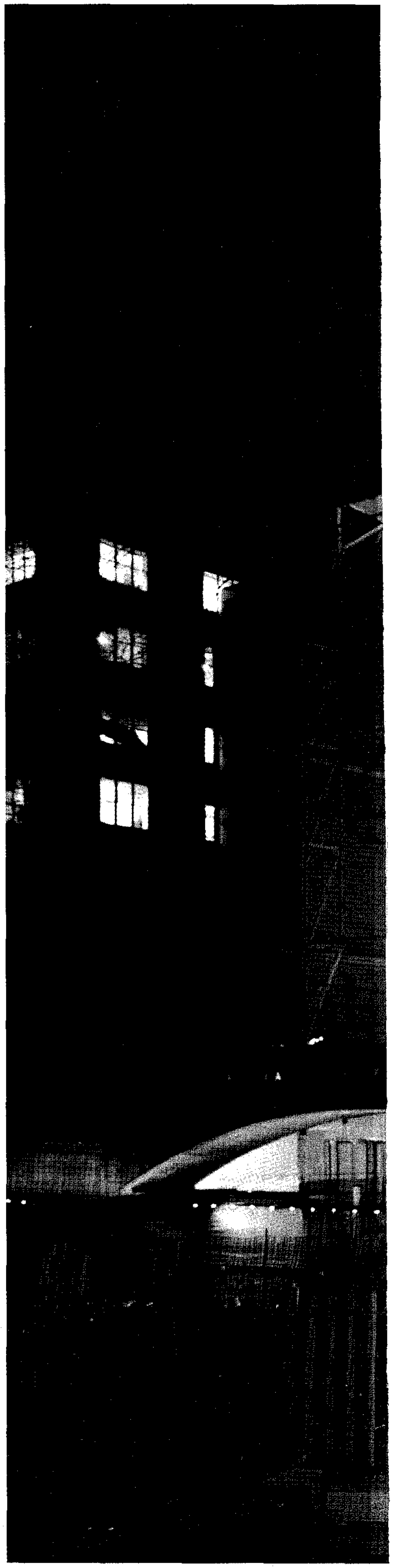
How New York's remarkable new planetarium got built.

BY PAUL GOLDBERGER

LARGE public buildings often bear only a loose resemblance to what was originally in the minds of the architects who designed them. Things get cut back to save money; somebody has second thoughts about the way part of the building will function; it takes so long to get public approval that the original idea starts to seem dated; the political process turns the design into a camel. One or more of these things happen to all buildings to some extent, and the more casual the initial concept is, the more likely it is to be revised. An idea sketched on the back of an envelope ends up being modified a lot more than an idea hatched in a computer does.

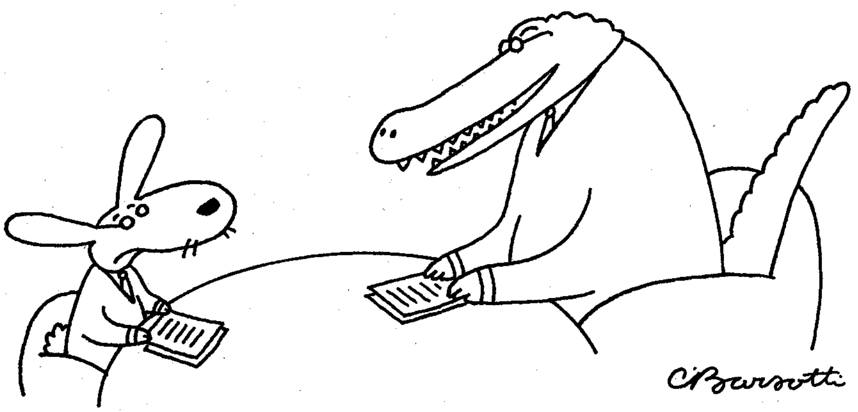
The new Rose Center for Earth and Space, at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, is a happy exception to this truism. The two-hundred-million-dollar project, which includes the most advanced planetarium in the world, started out as a drawing on a napkin. Not long after seeing the sketch, the board of the museum decided to scrap its plans to renovate the aging Hayden Planetarium and to build something new instead. It took less than six years to get the project completed, which is probably record time for a large institution in New York City. What is more surprising still is that the Rose Center—an enormous aluminum-clad sphere, eighty-seven feet in diameter, set within a cube of glass—looks almost identical to the original sketch.

One enters the Rose Center through a long, low arch that has been cut into the gray granite base on which the glass box sits. The arch was intended to evoke the low arch of the nineteenth-century entrance to the south end of the museum, on West Seventy-seventh Street, and it is one of the few weak gestures made by the architect, James Stewart Polshek. The allusion doesn't make a lot of sense, and compromises the purity of Polshek's building. But there is no correct way to enter a sphere; it should hover in space, not touch the earth or have anything so mundane as a door, and, in fact, the Rose Center is only slightly earthbound. When you look at it from the Eighty-first Street side of the museum, it sometimes seems as if the glass box were going to fold back and the sphere start to rise, silently floating up into the sky like a bubble. The cube is sheathed in an unusual kind of glass, called water white, which doesn't have the greenish tint of conventional glass. It is almost completely transparent. In some kinds of light, the cube seems to disappear entirely and the sphere appears to be sitting inside an open metal framework. At other times, the buildings to the north are reflected softly in the glass and the sphere seems to poke from behind a cloud in back of them. Polshek's structure is a temple of serene geometries, perhaps the purest piece of monumental architecture built in the United States since the Washington Monument went up on the Mall more than a century ago. Its only true comrade is I. M. Pei's pyramid, at the Louvre. Like Pei, Polshek has rendered



The Rose Center for Earth a

Space at the American Museum of Natural History sometimes seems about to lift off. Photograph by Robert Polidori.



"Oh, dear, I'm afraid you've backed me into a corner."

• •

a classic, simple geometric form with the lightest, most advanced technology possible, so that an immense shape appears to be almost weightless: a vast ball held in the lightest of tethers.

In the aftermath of the runaway popular success of Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, it is tempting to link this project to the public's newfound love of modernist architectural icons. While it's a far more conservative building than Gehry's, once it opens next month a lot of people will be talking about it as having a similar kind of potent magnetic attraction. By the standards of New York, where cultural daring is usually cut off at the knees, this may be the most important building of the decade, if only because it happened. There is no one like François Mitterrand to push *grands projets* on New York, or even anyone like Robert Moses. Rudy Giuliani authorized more than forty million dollars of city funds for the museum once the project got going, but none of the ideas came from him, or from any other public official. The museum conceived of the Rose Center, shepherded it through the political process, and found most of the money to get it built.

No one is quite sure why the Rose Center has had such a charmed life, but the success of the project is surely due in large part to the museum's president, Ellen Futter, who is a skilled negotiator through political thickets. And then perhaps the time had simply come for a spectacular gesture by the museum, where no major construction had occurred for more than half a century. Traditionally, museums of science and natural history don't attract the kind of big money that art museums do, but they don't attract the same kinds of controversy, either, which helped this project. Who could be against fossils and stars? Polshek's design probably meant relatively little in getting the project built, since most people couldn't tell how unusual, not to say spectacular, the building was going to be.

BY the early nineteen-nineties, the Hayden Planetarium had become something of a disaster. Attendance dropped from seven hundred thousand paid admissions in 1976 to half that figure in 1993. The planetarium, a two-story, institutional brick box with Art Deco trim and a green hemispherical dome sheathed in copper, looked as run-down as a public school. Many of its most famous features, like the scales showing a person's weight on various planets and a huge model of the solar system, had been dismantled or were broken. In any case, they were outdated. Sitting on a chair in a dingy auditorium and looking up at projections of the stars no longer provides much of a thrill. "You could get more excitement through technology at home," Futter says. She came to the museum in 1993, and was soon convinced that upgrading the planetarium should rank at the top of her priorities. She was thinking of spending a few million dollars to fix up the old Hayden, and she issued a call to exhibition designers to make proposals. One of the designers asked James Polshek to join him in making a presentation, and Polshek ended up transforming the project.

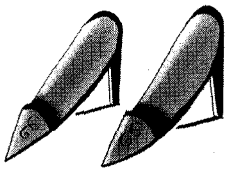
Polshek is a short, wiry man of sixty-nine who is both amiable and intense. He has built his firm, the Polshek Partnership, from a small atelier into one of the nation's most prominent designers of cultural facilities. Most of his work is modernist in style, but it tends to have a gentle, nonaggressive air to it, and he does plenty of restorations of historic buildings, too. Polshek designed the restoration of Carnegie Hall, the new home for the Santa Fe Opera, and the renovation of the Ed Sullivan Theatre for David Letterman, and earlier this year he won the plum commission for the Clinton Presidential Library in Little Rock. Polshek had been told that there was probably not much architecture to be done at the Museum of Natural History, but he was curious, and he went to take a look. "God, what a dump," he says. He remembers an early conversation with the board of trustees as focussing mainly on the question of whether a cosmetic fixup of the planetarium could also include something really important to the museum's future, like building a new garage. And then Richard Gilder, a trustee who had ambitions that went beyond solving the museum's parking problems, spoke up.

"Have we allowed you to be bold enough here?" Gilder said to Polshek. "Have we allowed you to think as big as we should? What would you do if money were no object?"

"That was all Jim needed to hear," Ellen Futter says. She asked Polshek if he would take a week or two to think about something more than a modest redesign of the old planetarium. He told her that he thought a complete reconstruction could be done for somewhere around twenty-five million dollars, and she figured she could find the money somewhere. After all, her board was generous, and times were getting better. Polshek didn't have the job; at that point, no one even knew what the job was—just that there was a good possibility that Futter might be able to persuade the board to let her give the Hayden Planetarium something more than a paint job and some flashier exhibits. No one was even thinking of a new building.

Polshek and his partner, Todd Schliemann, studied the history of the planetarium. What they liked best was its interior dome, which was the oldest surviving thin-shell reinforced-concrete dome in the United States. (The copper that gave the exterior its green tone was an outer layer.) The technology for it had been developed in the twenties by a German construction firm in partnership with Carl Zeiss, the company that designed and manufactured the immense, insectlike projectors that threw the images of the night sky onto the rounded ceiling. Before Zeiss created its first projectors, in 1923, planetariums were small rooms with the constellations painted on the ceiling, or miniature rounded domes that shifted to show the movement of the stars. Zeiss figured out a way to have the stars themselves move, which permitted much bigger, auditorium-sized rooms. Zeiss usually sold its domes and projectors as a complete planetarium package, but the Museum of Natural History, constrained by Depression-era construction loans that required American-made materials, had to hire engineers to create an American version.

The Hayden would become the most famous American planetarium, but it was actually one of the most modest of its generation. The monumental, sprawling Griffith Observatory in Los Angeles and the Adler Planetarium in Chicago were much grander. The firm that designed the Hayden, Trowbridge & Livingston, had in the early years of the century produced such masterworks as the B. Altman store and the St. Regis Hotel on Fifth Avenue, but by the thirties it was turning out banal, institutional work. That seemed to suit the museum just fine, since according to its master plan, which was created by the architect Calvert Vaux and refined by J. C. Cady, who was also the architect of the original Metropolitan Opera House, the planetarium was to be situated in a courtyard. If the museum ever got finished—it had been adding sections gradually since 1877, when the original wing was completed—the planetarium would be swallowed up. What it looked like hardly mattered to its builders.



J. C. Cady designed the museum's Romanesque wings along Seventy-seventh Street and envisioned continuing that same architecture in a vast complex with a flamboyant tower in the center and four large courtyards. His mega-museum would have filled all of Manhattan Square, as the four-block site along Central Park West between Seventy-seventh and Eighty-first Streets was then known. Two of the courtyards had been built early on, along the Seventy-seventh Street side, and then filled in with more buildings. The rest of the institution's development had been somewhat helter-skelter, and while the architect John Russell Pope gave the museum a grandiose front door in the form of the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial rotunda, which opened in 1936, the institution as a whole still looked unfinished sixty years later, especially on its north side. There was limestone on Central Park West, but the walls facing Eighty-first Street were raw brick. Most of the unused land, which was renamed Theodore Roosevelt Park in the nineteen-twenties, had been used as parkland for so long that there was no chance the museum could ever reclaim it.

POLSHEK tried to focus on the planetarium itself, and he began thinking more and more about the thin concrete dome. Then, he says, "I took a compass, and I saw that you could complete the circle"—that the dome was set high enough off the ground so that it would be possible to turn it into a sphere. Since the dome was a separate structure, independent of the main planetarium building, Polshek thought it would be feasible to take down the brick façade of the old planetarium, complete the sphere, then cover the whole thing with a new façade. "I became hooked on the idea of saving this as a piece of industrial archeology," he says. He thought the idea of a half-old, half-new dome was an appealing concept, not only on its own terms but also because he believed it would deflect any criticism that he was destroying the old planetarium, which was protected by the city's landmarks-preservation law.

Polshek called Futter and told her he had an idea he wanted to show her. "He had a napkin in his hand, and he just drew a circle, then he put a box around it," Futter told me. "It was so simple, and I couldn't get it out of my brain." At first, Polshek and Schliemann were thinking in terms of a solid box, like the old Hayden. "We started with the idea of a sphere inside a solid building, then we moved to having it poking out," Schliemann recalls. "Then we said why don't we expose it all the way and make the sphere an icon? The museum is known for its icons—the blue whale, the canoe at the Seventy-seventh Street entrance, the dinosaurs. Let's just have the sphere in a glass box." By then, Polshek and Schlie-

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mann had given up any idea of saving the old building. "We wanted a shed, just big enough to enclose the sphere, so there would be a tension between the enclosure and the thing enclosed," Schliemann says. That way, the sphere would be "bursting out of its space," which is pretty much what the other iconic objects, like the blue whale and the canoe, do in their parts of the museum.

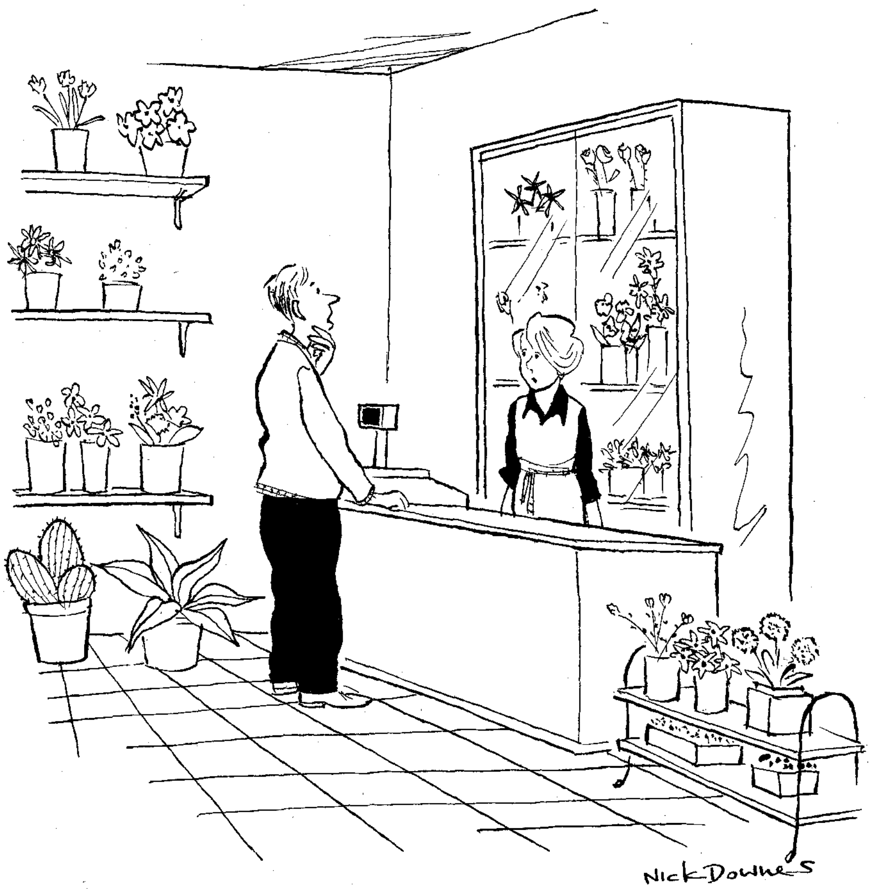
There was an important architectural precedent for the new plan. In 1784, the visionary French neoclassical architect Étienne-Louis Boullée conceived of a cenotaph for Sir Isaac Newton in the form of a vast sphere, several times bigger than the one Polshek and Schliemann were thinking of for New York. Like most of Boullée's projects, it was a piece of conceptual architecture more than a buildable structure, but it has captivated architects for two centuries. Boullée proposed that the sphere be punctured by holes that would represent the positions of the stars and planets, making it a primitive version of a planetarium. Polshek and Schliemann didn't say much about Boullée to their client. They knew that talking about eighteenth-century French visionary architecture was not the way to convince the board of trustees of the Museum of Natural History that this project was their institution's ticket to the twenty-first century.

In the fall of 1994, the architects were invited to present their scheme for a completely new building to Futter. "My wife said, 'This is your Louvre, don't blow it,'" Polshek recalls. "And she was right. Like I. M. Pei, we were trying to use transparency and modern technology to open up an institution." In fact, Polshek eventually hired consultants who worked with Pei on his pyramid at the Louvre to help design and engineer the glass structure that would surround the sphere. To enhance the sense of lightness, the sheets of glass are literally hung from one another instead of being set into a frame. They are anchored in place by elegantly crafted steel clamps. As for the sphere, after toying with the notion of hanging it from the roof, placing it on a base that would look like the world's largest golf tee, or supporting it from the sides in the manner of a potato set into a glass on toothpicks, Polshek and Schliemann decided to place it on three huge pairs of legs, like a tripod. Visitors could walk under the sphere as well as all the way around it, and from most angles it would appear unsupported.

By this point, Futter had realized that if she was going to go for a new building she might as well try to use it to improve the Eighty-first Street side of the museum. She ordered the project expanded to include not only the new planetarium but a garage, a roof terrace, and a new restaurant, all of which were intended to give some coherence to the museum's north end. Futter saw it as her opportunity to, in a single gesture, fix a tired department of the museum and bring it closer to the rest of the institution, show the world that the museum was capable of commissioning the most advanced technology imaginable, and increase box-office. She was also building an architectural monument to her tenure.

THE board of the museum agreed to go along with the project when Futter revealed that one of its members, who wanted to remain anonymous, was putting up twenty million dollars for it. Futter got the city—which owns the museum's land and its buildings, and is therefore technically the institution's landlord—to add another thirty million. Nobody had any idea what the project would cost, not only because constructing a nine-story sphere in a glass box is a complicated matter but also because no one had yet even begun to figure out what technology would be necessary to produce the most advanced planetarium imaginable, and then to design some exhibits to accompany it.

Richard Gilder, who had encouraged Polshek to think in terms of a new building at the outset, continued to be enthusiastic, as did the anonymous donor, who in 1996 was revealed to be Frederick P. Rose, one of the city's most prominent builders, and his wife, Sandra. The Roses had previously underwritten the construction of an administration building for Lincoln Center and the renovation of the main reading room of the New York Public Library. Fred Rose, who was seventy-two when his gift to the museum was announced, did not simply write checks for the projects he supported. He believed he was contributing his expertise as well as his cash, and he loved to show up at building sites, asking questions and greeting workers, many of whom he knew by name.



"What sort of flowers say, 'I promise to obey the restraining order'?"

Once construction got going on the planetarium, it would have been impossible to keep Rose's involvement a secret.

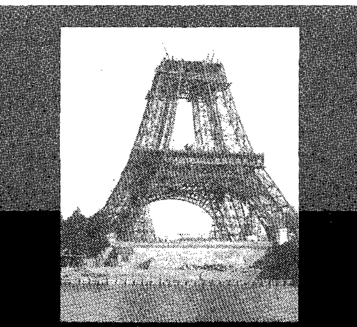
Rose was an animated man who tended to pontificate. On the other hand, he would often sit quietly and fold dollar bills into perfectly wrought origami figures while he watched and listened. He became so excited by the planetarium project that he began reading books about astrophysics, and he asked that a portion of his gift to the museum be used to endow the position of planetarium director. Although he did not discuss it with Futter and his colleagues on the board, he was suffering from cancer, and he knew that it was far from certain that he would live to see the building finished. He made two visits on one day late last August, the first as his regular weekly inspection tour and the second to inspect some granite that hadn't arrived when he was there in the morning. Then he went to his home on the Long Island Sound, where he died in mid-September.

The man who now occupies the Rose chair as head of the planetarium and the museum's department of astronomy is a forty-one-year-old African-American scientist, Neil deGrasse Tyson, who is also an associate professor of astrophysics at Princeton University. Tyson grew up in the Bronx, and he first saw the night sky when he was taken to the Hayden Planetarium as a child. He says he knew at that moment what he wanted to do with his life. Tyson received his doctorate in astrophysics from Columbia in 1991. He wrote a book of popular astronomy called "Merlin's Tour of the Universe," which brought him to the attention of the museum, and in 1994 he began working there half time. When Futter decided two years later to upgrade the planetarium, he became its full-time director. That put him, at first, in conflict with Polshek, because Tyson didn't like the architect's schemes. "I said, 'Get it out of my face, I don't need architects doing this for the sake of architectural form,' " he recalled one day a few weeks ago as we sat in his tiny, messy, windowless office. "But then"—Tyson jabbed his finger into my leg—"the president gave us our blank slate, and Polshek came back with a whole new sphere, and I thought, I can do something with this." Tyson picked up a miniature sphere from a table, and banged that into my leg. "This can be an icon, it can be architecture, and it can be an exhibit."

What Tyson hated about the initial design wasn't the spherical nature of it but Polshek's attempt to save the original Hayden. Tyson thought the early schemes were nothing more than attempts to cover up with an architectural gimmick the fact that the old planetarium was too small. "The original planetarium building was designed around showing all that we knew, and the volume of knowledge has grown exponentially," Tyson said to me. "More has been learned and written about astronomy since 1980 than in the whole of history before then."

The American Museum of Natural History is surrounded by coöperative apartment buildings whose residents are happy to take advantage of the sunshine and the views that come from having a low-rise museum and a park in front of them but who complain constantly about the way their streets are clogged by the cars of suburban visitors to the museum on weekends and by the yellow buses of school groups during the week. To these people, the notion of a new planetarium meant only more cars, more people, more noise. There was also a group of neighbors to whom the most important aspect of the museum property was the dog run in the middle of Theodore Roosevelt Park, and when they heard that the museum planned to fix up the park as part of the project, they feared that the dog run would disappear.

Strangely, the constituency that most worried Futter and Polshek was largely silent. New York has one of the strongest landmarks-preservation laws in the country, and one of the most active communities of people who agitate to preserve important buildings. "We were proposing to tear down a landmark, and you don't enter into that lightly," Schliemann says. But Polshek felt that he could make a strong case that the original Hayden was an undistinguished building, its landmark status a result only of its presence within the museum complex, and also that his new building would represent a higher architectural standard. The notion that the new might somehow be better than the old is not an argument that gets made very often in landmarks hearings. But it was at the core of the museum's long, elaborately crafted case, which began with an



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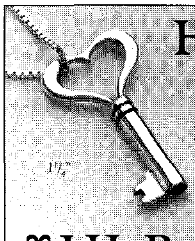

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eighty-five-page report and continued through statements made by Futter, Polshek, Tyson, and other officials in the course of months of public hearings. Polshek estimated that the museum spent more than a million dollars on consultants and lawyers to make its case, which came down to saying that the value of the old Hayden Planetarium was purely sentimental.

An ad-hoc community group did try to save the planetarium, but it never managed to get the attention of most of the city's historic-preservation establishment, which was overwhelmingly in the museum's camp. Indeed, it seemed almost as if organizations like the Municipal Art Society and the Landmarks Conservancy thought that the planetarium represented an opportunity to show the world that they were not knee-jerk preservationists. "You think we always want to save everything? Remember the planetarium," these groups could say to real-estate developers and others whom they might be opposing in the future. Much the same reasoning prevailed at the landmarks commission itself, which voted unanimously to let the museum tear down the old building and replace it with Polshek's. A caveat was that the new structure contain a display commemorating the history of the original planetarium—a kind of curatorial reparation.

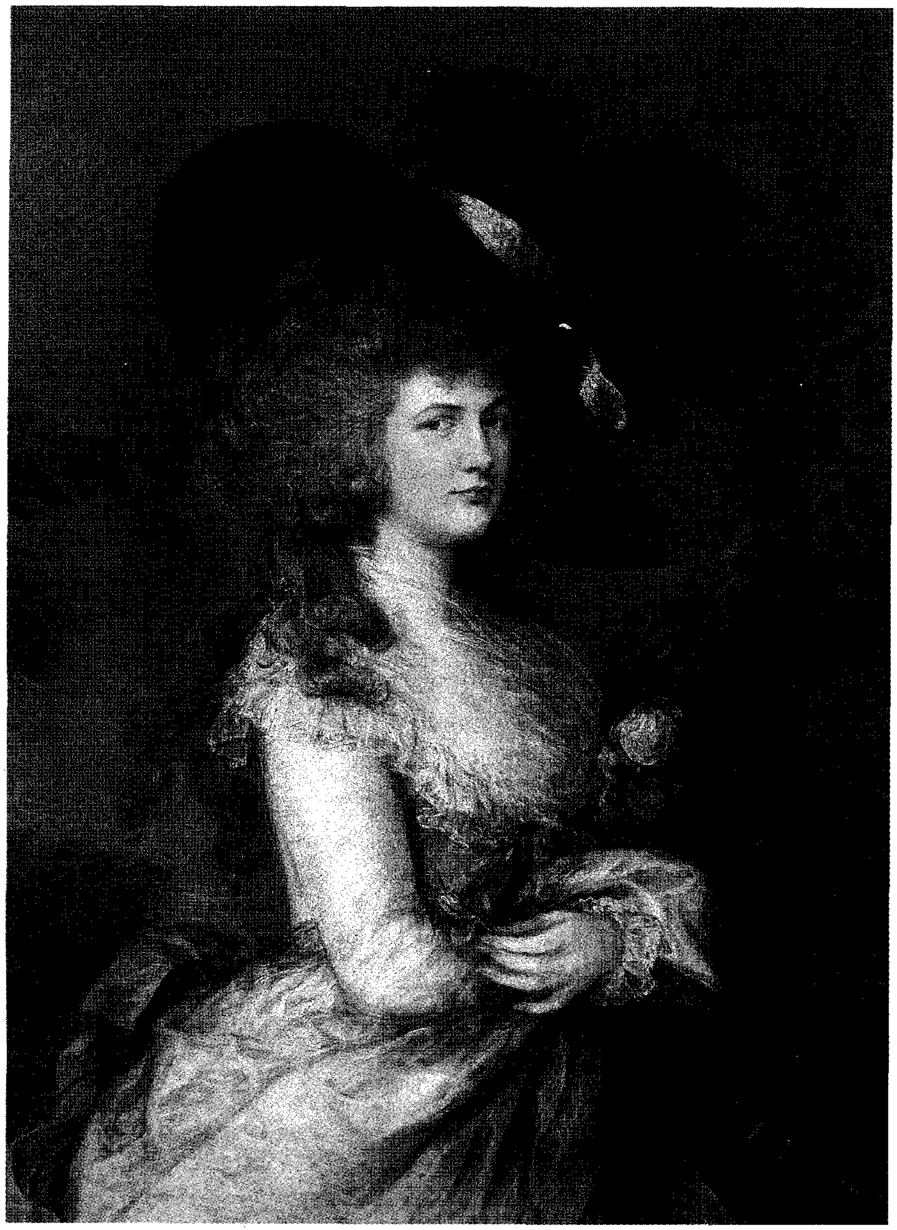
The neighbors who were worried about traffic and noise did not come around so easily. They found the museum intransigent at the beginning (although the dog run was saved early on). It was not until lawsuits were filed by two local groups who were trying to stop the project altogether that Futter and Jim Schmidt, an architect who was in charge of day-to-day management of the construction, agreed to change the traffic patterns leading to the garage and to restrict the use of amplified music on the terrace, which the museum plans to use for outdoor parties. The two lawsuits were dismissed.

As the politics was playing out, the architects were refining the look of the sphere and the glass box, and the scientists and the exhibition designers were beginning to figure out what should go inside. Polshek and Schliemann played with the possibility of making the inside of the sphere a single space, then concluded that there was no way to get the configuration of the planetarium right—it needed a flat floor. So they put a floor in a little over half-way down, slightly below the equator, leaving a space at the bottom of the sphere, which Neil Tyson and Ralph Appelbaum, the exhibition designer, decided to turn into a demonstration of the Big Bang. Appelbaum had designed the permanent exhibition of the Holocaust Museum in Washington, as well as the Natural History Museum's new fossil and dinosaur halls and its Hall of Planet Earth. He had nothing to do with the "sky show"—the extravaganza within the planetarium itself—but he oversaw a lot of what went on elsewhere in the building. It was he, for example, who thought about how people should emerge from the sphere and suggested a ramp circling it, which Polshek and Schliemann designed to be supported on cantilevers so that it would appear to fly out in space, like one of Saturn's rings. It was decided that the ramp should display a time line showing the thirteen-billion-year history of the universe. Thirteen billion years are spread out over three hundred feet: three million six hundred thousand years per inch. On that scale, the era of the dinosaurs takes up the last ten feet of the ramp, and the entire length of human history is represented by a hair.

Appelbaum also designed elements that use the sphere itself as a demonstration of scale. Objects are hung from the ceiling and affixed to railings, and each has a message: if the sphere is the sun, then this little nine-inch ball is the earth, and if the sphere is a rhinovirus, then this ten-inch ball is a hydrogen atom. All of the elements are beautiful, vivid, and clear. "There was a desire throughout this whole project to deal with how hard it is to create the experience of awe," Appelbaum says. "We get it in great architecture, but now, at a time when the language is so perverted that a Tommy Hilfiger sneaker or a perfume is described as 'awesome,' we need to think again about how we can create a sense of aesthetic awe."

The planetarium show itself is likely to meet this challenge. It was put together by a team led by Jim Sweizer, an astrophysicist who is the planetarium's director of special projects. Sweizer and Tyson worked with the Carl Zeiss company to design a projector, and they requested so many modifications to Zeiss's most advanced model, the Mark VIII, that Zeiss declared the New York projector to be the first Mark IX. The new Hayden Planetarium (the theatre itself still carries the Hayden name, though it is now part of the Rose Center) accommodates four hundred and thirty-two people. They sit in high-backed auditorium chairs with headrests and look up to the dome—a scrim of light-colored, perforated aluminum set several feet in from the outer surface of the sphere, which is also made of perforated aluminum. The space in between the layers has scaffolding and catwalks for maintenance. The new Zeiss shows more than nine thousand stars and the Milky Way galaxy with a stunning degree of clarity, and it is possible to program it to show the sky not only from anywhere on earth at any time of the year but from anywhere in the solar system. A second set of images, produced by computer-generated videos based on data from satellites and the Hubble Space Telescope, moves observers through the cosmos. They watch stars form and galaxies shift in space. The show is as exciting as anything in a theme park, and yet it has great authority: the voice of the cosmos is speaking through its Designated Institution on Earth.

The connection between pure architectural form and content isn't perfect—the decision to split the interior of the sphere, while practical, was a compromise, and the huge legs that support the sphere are heavy and impossible to ignore. In some ways, the sphere will never look as pure as it did more than a year ago, when the steel framework came together to form a complete globe and the glass cube hadn't yet been constructed around it. For a couple of weeks toward the end of 1998, the gridded sphere stood free, unencumbered by anything over or inside it. As the project neared completion, it got filled up with things, and its architectural power wasn't always as apparent. But perhaps that is as it should be. Polshek's sphere may represent Earth in the cosmos, or the universe, or the very idea of primal geometric form, but it is still a building, bound by the laws of gravity and structure and by the obligations of use. It has a bottom, a middle, and a top. It symbolizes the infinity of space, but it also represents the order of Earth, and the struggle to bring these things into harmony. ♦



Thomas Gainsborough's portrait of Georgiana, the fifth Duchess of Devonshire.

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THE HIGH LIFE

Sex and gambling in eighteenth-century England.

BY FRANCINE DU PLESSIX GRAY

BY 1779, the year Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, turned twenty-two, she was the most talked-about woman in Great Britain. Her novel "The Sylph," which depicted the sexual license and callousness of her fast set of friends, had gone through four printings, and she had served as the model for Lady Teazle in Richard Sheridan's "The School for Scandal." Wax casts of Georgiana, "intended as ornaments to mansions," were for sale alongside likenesses of the Prince of Wales; milliners made fans decorated with her portrait; she was nearly crushed by crowds when she appeared in public places such as

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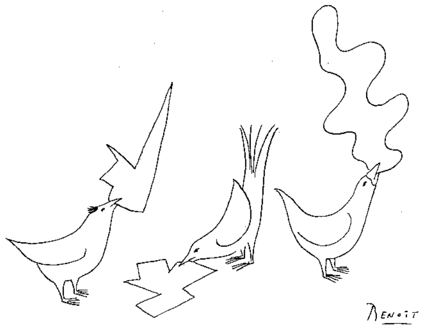
the pleasure gardens at Ranelagh. Her extravagant costumes and her outlandish hats and hairdos—which might rise as much as three feet above her head and feature a ship in full sail or a pastoral scene with sheep and trees—were more assiduously chronicled than those of any other aristocrat in England. She was a confidante, and perhaps a lover, of the country's most charismatic politician, Charles James Fox, and was the closest friend of the debauched, hysterics-prone Prince of Wales ("Prinny" to his pals, "dearest brother" to her). The vivacious Duchess of Devonshire, in sum, was "the glass and model of fashion" and the uncontested leader of that early form of café society called the "ton"—an amalgam of writers, actors, politicians, racy aristocrats, and assorted libertines which, although it may not have included more than a thousand persons, set all standards of taste in Great Britain in the last decades of the eighteenth century.

As we learn in Amanda Foreman's riveting new biography, "Georgiana: Duchess of Devonshire" (Random House; $29.95), the willowy, russet-haired charmer not only was a great beauty—in every sense superb except for her somewhat bulging eyes—but was also considered the most warm-hearted woman in the realm. She was noted for her generosity to charities and friends alike, and famous for her capacity to make those she addressed feel as if they were the center of the world. So it seems all the more odd that the only man who did not appear to be smitten by the Duchess was her indolent, taciturn, prodigiously self-absorbed husband, William Cavendish, fifth Duke of Devonshire. He was one of the wealthiest nobles in the nation, the owner of a magnificent art collection and many mansions (including Devonshire House and the legendary Chatsworth), yet his idea of a good time was to drink and play cards with his cronies at Brooks's, the exclusive club where he dined nightly, year in, year out, on a broiled bladebone of mutton.

Devonshire, one of twenty-eight English dukes who were superseded in rank only by royalty, had been a great catch, although the genetic credentials of Lady Georgiana Spencer, the oldest child of the Earl and Countess Spencer, were almost as estimable. Like her great-great-great-great-niece Diana, Princess of Wales, who would share with her a love of risk, a deep insecurity, a magical rapport with crowds, and the tendency to eclipse a chilly husband, Georgiana was brought up at the family seat of Althorp, where the Spencers had lived since the sixteenth century. Her parents were a highly cultivated and unusually faithful couple who instilled in their children that cult of sentiment which burgeoned in Europe in the wake of Rousseau and Sterne. They encouraged Georgiana's love of performance, and she grew up anxiously striving to please, delighting her mother and father with her natural grace and her swift talent for mastering Latin, music, foreign languages, and the intricacies of court etiquette.

Aged sixteen when she was affianced to the monosyllabic twenty-four-year-old Duke, Georgiana naïvely assumed that her marriage, like her parents', would offer bonds of shared emotions and intellectual pursuits. No such luck. The Duke, whose milliner girlfriend, unbeknownst to his wife, was suckling his newborn daughter in a country cottage as he took his wedding vows, looked on Georgiana merely as good breeding stock. His notion of marital affection was to barge into his bride's room after his stint at Brooks's was over and make a determined effort to produce an heir. Faced with such conjugal frustrations, a woman of Georgiana's temperament and resources tends to find ways to rechannel her energies. Georgiana found solace in gambling, and particularly in the popular game of faro, which became her favorite diversion. She turned Devonshire House into London's most exclusive gambling club, even charging professional faro dealers fifty guineas a night, illegally, for the right to set up tables there.



Foreman puts this passion of Georgiana's in a historical perspective, reminding us that gambling was to the eighteenth-century British aristocracy what gin was to the lower classes: the yearly ruin of thousands of families, and a frequent cause for suicide. Moreover, the Duchess's entourage was notably devoid of any role models who could have kept her from the gaming table. Her parents had hired instructors in order to learn winning tactics for faro; her beloved sister Harriet, Lady Duncannon (later Countess of Bessborough), a great beauty and wit in her own right, was also a compulsive gambler, as was the Prince of Wales. Georgiana's friend Charles Fox had been known to spend thirty-six consecutive hours at the gaming table, but was fortunate in having an excessively indulgent father, Lord Holland, who covered a whopping hundred and forty thousand pounds (nearly fourteen million contemporary dollars) of his son's accumulated debts. Georgiana had no such support. Religion had replaced gambling in the life of the loving but stifling Lady Spencer by the time her daughter married, and she had little to offer except sermons.

Within two years of Georgiana's marriage, her arrears amounted to three thousand pounds (two hundred and ninety-seven thousand dollars)—almost the equivalent of the yearly allowance given her by her husband. The Duke grudgingly covered these debts, but he was under constant pressure from his siblings, the rapacious Cavendishes, to rein his wife in. Too gentle, too genial, and too cowardly to endure confrontations, Georgiana began to entangle herself in a network of lies and mounting debts (often owed to fraudulent bankers), which plagued her for the rest of her life. Foreman notes that the anxieties and depressions caused by these debts may well have been linked to the extreme manner in which Georgiana alternated eating binges with bouts of total starvation, and also to her very frequent miscarriages. It was evident that the Duke, to whom the continuance of the Cavendish dynasty was a form of religious obsession, had married her for two simple reasons: to maintain his family's interests and to produce an heir, and five years into their marriage she was proving incapable of fulfilling either goal.

IT is in the context of this anguish that one must see the ascendance in Georgiana's life of the ambitious Lady Elizabeth Foster. The Devonshires first met Lady Foster—Bess to her intimates—in the summer of 1782, while taking the cure at Bath. She was the second daughter of the notably avaricious Earl-Bishop of Bristol, and had made a rotten marriage, in her teens, with a dissolute Irish M.P. After Bess learned that he had seduced her maid, the couple had separated, and she had found herself, according to the laws of the time, without a penny (her indifferent father refused her any material support), and without any visiting rights to her two sons. Frail, with dark hair framing a tiny oval face, fluent in French and Italian, and displaying a cultivated air of feminine helplessness, she emanated such sinuous, coquettish charm that no man, according to Edward Gibbon, "could withstand her."

For the sentimental, magnanimous Georgiana, it was love at first sight. Poor Bess, so sensitive, so vulnerable, so mistreated! Georgiana readily persuaded the Duke, whose milliner had recently died, to be equally smitten. Within a few months of their meeting, Bess—part best friend and confidante, part paid companion—moved into the Devonshire household. With the Duke, who loved to have two women competing for his attention, she was submissive and flirtatious; with the Duchess, whom she both envied and revered, she was endlessly attentive, offering a passionate emotional relationship of a kind that Georgiana had never enjoyed with men. The three had a coded language of their own, in part taken from the patois of the London ton ("How do oo do"), in part devised by them: the Duke was Canis because of his great love of dogs, the Duchess and Bess were Rat and Racky, Charles Fox was the Eyebrow. And Bess—notwithstanding frequent trips to the Continent, where the Devonshires often sent her to improve her health and to care for the Duke's illegitimate daughter—apparently enhanced the spouses' domestic functioning. For in 1783, after nine years of marriage, the Duchess finally brought a child successfully to term. It was a girl, alas, but at least she heightened the Duke's hopes for a male heir.

The threesome's mutual devotion grew apace, and two years after Georgiana's first daughter was born both women were pregnant by the Duke. Bess, bitterly aware that she and the Duchess must have conceived within days or hours of each other, was sent off to France by the Duke. "Oh Bess," the blissfully ignorant Georgiana wrote upon being separated from her "dearest, ever ever dearest" friend, "every sensation I feel but heightens my adoration of you." Were Georgiana and Bess lovers in a homosexual sense? The women's correspondence has been so heavily censored by their descendants that the question will never be resolved. Foreman emphasizes that our more rigid notions of gender relations should not be imposed upon a culture whose expressions of sexuality might have been considerably more androgynous than ours.

BUT to dwell exclusively on the psychosexual machinations of the Devonshires' ménage, which many readers may find the most fascinating aspect of Foreman's biography, would be to overlook that sizable portion which offers a panorama of British politics in the age of William Pitt the Younger, and focusses on Georgiana's activity in the Whig Party. It is one of the few constructive activities that the Duchess could trace to her husband. The Cavendishes, who regarded themselves as divinely appointed protectors of British constitutional liberty, had been leaders of the Whig Party ever since they had helped to overthrow the Catholic James II and secured the British throne for his Protestant daughter and son-in-law, Mary and William of Orange. It was at the urging of the Duke's friend Charles Fox, the rotund, blustering star of the Whigs' liberal wing, that Georgiana was persuaded to enter into the thick of politics.

In the election of 1784, when the Whigs hoped to return to power, Geor-

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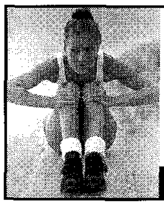

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giana campaigned vigorously for Fox's election as M.P. for the district of Westminster. She used populist tactics unheard of for a member of her class and gender, chatting with merchants over pints of ale and tipples of gin, hugging women and children in the streets, and becoming godmother to dozens of infants in return for political support. Although Foreman may be exaggerating when she claims that her subject was "the first woman to conduct a modern electoral campaign," the warmth and intimacy of Georgiana's manner did cause her to be lampooned in dozens of cartoons hinting that she was exchanging sexual favors for votes.

Still, Georgiana's political prominence was hardly a remedy for the Devonshires' dynastic anxieties. The issue of a male heir became all the more pressing for the Duchess in 1788, fourteen years into her marriage, when Bess went abroad again, to give birth to a Devonshire-sired son, Augustus Clifford. This time, she travelled with the serene acquiescence of Georgiana, who had fallen in love with the rising political star Charles Grey. The following year, Georgiana, too, became pregnant by the Duke, and she must have sensed that the stakes had never been so high. By now, even Bess was cheering for a legitimate male heir, knowing full well that her future depended on the survival of the Devonshires' marriage. Georgiana, terrified that pressure from her British creditors might cause her to miscarry, decided to have her baby in France, the turmoil of the French Revolution notwithstanding.

In May, 1790, as revolutionary fervor was mounting across the country, the family awaited the child's arrival in a friend's house outside of Paris. So brilliantly does Foreman build up the suspense that even the most heartless reader will cheer with relief at the appearance of the Marquis of Hartington, the future sixth Duke of Devonshire, who would inherit all his father's glorious estates and remain a bachelor. Like Georgiana, he became a much beloved host and patron of the arts and enjoyed close friendships with members of his own sex, maintaining a lifelong attachment to one of the century's distinguished architects and gardeners, Joseph Paxton.

GEORGIANA'S last decade was her darkest. In 1791, both she and Bess were exiled by the angry Duke when he learned that Georgiana was pregnant with Charles Grey's child. She gave birth to a daughter in France, with Bess in loving attendance. His Grace's displeasure lasted nearly two years. It was a difficult time for both women, who suffered greatly from not seeing their children. Soon after coming home, Georgiana learned, with immense sorrow, that the future Earl Grey, who as Prime Minister would expand the voting rights of Britons through the Great Reform Act of 1832, was planning to marry the young heiress Mary Ponsonby. (The couple eventually had fifteen children.) In characteristically amiable fashion, Georgiana found no better way of consoling herself for the loss of her lover than to turn his wife into one of her closest friends. She continued to write voluminously—verse, essays, dramas—and composed a song for Sheridan's play "Pizarro," which ran for an unprecedented thirty-one nights. She also took up chemistry, attended lectures at the Royal Academy, and became a gifted amateur mineralogist.

Then, in the late seventeen-nineties, Georgiana suffered dreadful eye infections. They left her half blind and disfigured, and she ventured far less into society. In the first months of 1806, she enjoyed a last, shining moment as the darling of the Whig Party, having played an important role in the formation of a new Cabinet, which included several of her intimates—her brother George Spencer as Home Secretary, Charles Grey as First Lord of the Admiralty, Fox as Foreign Secretary, and Sheridan as Treasurer to the Navy. She died later that year, at the age of forty-eight, after a brief, painful bout of jaundice, ever tortured by her creditors and by a long list of debts that she had never confessed to her husband. "The best-natured and best-bred woman in England is gone," the Prince of Wales lamented.

Few of Georgiana's friends mourned her more deeply than Bess, whose future at Devonshire House the Duchess had thoughtfully secured in her will by making her the sole guardian of her papers. When, three years after Georgiana's death, the Duke of Devonshire took Bess as his wife, he proceeded to give her a taste of what Georgiana had endured by immediately taking on a new mistress. However, he died two years later, before the mistress could pose a threat. And the second Duchess of Devonshire, having tried, but pathetically failed, to emulate Georgiana's success in London society, moved to Rome, where she became involved with a cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church.

The principal difficulty of this scholarly, serious, and marvellously diverting book is that the bloodlines crisscrossing throughout the narrative are further confused by the insane pace of the main characters' coupling. Upon learning, for example, that perhaps only one of the five children of Lady Melbourne, Georgiana's rival as doyenne of London's fast set, was conceived by her husband, or that Georgiana's sister Harriet, shortly after concluding a tryst with the rakish Richard Sheridan, became impregnated, at the age of thirty-nine, by a lover twelve years her junior, who then proceeded to wed her niece, Harryo, Georgiana's second daughter, readers may feel as if they were visiting a kennel of purebreds run amok.

But such extravagances are among the vicarious pleasures of the book: the opulence of libido, the Olympian sense of privilege, the sheer scale of the physical appurtenances (the thousands of acres landscaped by Capability Brown, the four ships it took to carry the Devonshires' personnel and possessions when they crossed the Channel, the paintings and drawings by Tintoretto, Veronese, Rembrandt, and Rubens—and, notably, Poussin's "Et in Arcadia Ego"—hanging on the walls of Chatsworth and Devonshire House). Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, had her misfortunes, but reading about her life might make many twenty-first-century Americans feel like sad little Puritans who've missed out on a great deal of fun. Surely, Georgiana's intelligence, wit, and angelic magnanimity made her amply deserving of every ounce of fun she had. ◆

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BRIEFLY NOTED

Lieutenant-Colonel de Maumort, by Roger Martin du Gard; translated from the French by Luc Brébion and Timothy Crouse (Knopf; $35). A towering and intimate historical novel, in the form of the memoirs of one Bertrand de Maumort: his birth, in 1870; his coming of age ("At once, the paradise of his luminous and drowsy childhood closes before him"); his intellectual development in the salons of Paris; his career as a colonialist soldier. Maumort's is a voice from the Golden Age of the French novel, but it is also informed by the terrible knowledge of the World Wars. Martin du Gard began writing the book in 1941, during the German occupation. It was left unfinished at his death, in 1958, and has now been skillfully assembled according to the author's plans; some of the scaffolding shows, but it feels all the more modern for that.

Siam; or The Woman Who Shot a Man, by Lily Tuck (Overlook; $23.95). You dislike the newlywed Claire's husband, James, from the first page, when he makes love to her on a crowded flight to Bangkok without noticing her passivity. It soon becomes clear that he has given a false picture of his work in Thailand—it turns out that he builds runways from which U.S. bombers can take off for Vietnam (it's 1967)—and that he habitually evades his wife's questions. These questions seem more urgent when the first person Claire likes in this baffling country ominously disappears. An epigraph from Graham Greene warns of the harm an innocent can do, however, and Claire ends up more damaging than damaged in this elegant, gripping read.

Glyph, by Percival Everett (Graywolf; $22.95). A mock-heroic tale of baby Ralph, who at eleven months reads Auden, Balzac, and the Koran, this very funny novel lampoons gifted children, their nutty parents, psychiatrists (Ralph is kidnapped by his), kooky research projects, the national-security agenda, and French lit crit. (Roland Barthes plays a pointedly inconsequential part in the action.) Everett punctures every jargon-filled balloon; the book itself is an argument for the pleasures of straight narrative.

Tea, by Stacey D'Erasmo (Algonquin; $21.95). Barbed with bitter humor, this memorable début novel unfolds in three extended sequences, each developing a portrait of Isabel Gold, whose tranquil suburban childhood ends when her mother, a nurse and a former actress, commits suicide in a locked hospital closet. Seeking refuge in theatre and filmmaking, D'Erasmo's protagonist imagines infinite permutations of identity: "From each house, a different Isabel might emerge—one with a baby, one with a sword." But whether she is a child burying a time capsule, a teen-ager playing a horse in "Equus," or an adult facing an uneasy homecoming, she is always pursuing her indecipherable past.

Catfish and Mandala, by Andrew X. Pham (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $25). Pham fled Vietnam with his family in 1977, when he was ten. Seventeen years later, he quit his job and undertook a solo journey, mostly by bicycle, through the Western United States, Mexico, and Japan. He also travelled from one end to the other of Vietnam, where he visited relatives who had stayed behind, and uncovered, often painfully, fugitive layers of his own complex identity. A modern Plutarch might pair Pham's story with that of Chris McCandless, the uncompromising young man whose spiritual quest led him to a forlorn death in Alaska. Pham, instead of seeking out remote places where he could explore fantasies of self-sufficiency, instinctively understood that self-knowledge emerges from engagement with others. In his passionate telling, his travelogue acquires the universality of a bildungsroman.

The Unsteady March, by Philip A. Klinkner with Rogers M. Smith (Chicago; $32.50). These authors argue that white Americans have historically recognized the rights of black Americans only in periods of emergency, when the majority needed the help of the minority. In every American war, blacks served in the armed forces, and society promoted ideals of equality and liberty; once peace returned, repression set in, and African-Americans lost many of the freedoms they had briefly gained. During the Cold War, civil rights made progress because racial discrimination here served Soviet propaganda. Now, with the fall of Communism, Klinkner and Smith suggest, the pattern of regression is returning as the mantra of small government is invoked to dismantle programs that promote equality.

Infinite Perspectives, by Brian M. Ambroziak and Jeffrey R. Ambroziak (Princeton Architectural Press; $75). Following "An Atlas of Rare City Maps" and "Bird's Eye Views" comes this stunning cartographic anthology that examines verticality in mapping from ancient Iraq to the twenty-first century. In these colorful pages, mountains and molehills bubble up in relief maps of Imperial Roman highways and Leonardo's Tuscany, while the dramatic contours of the Grand Canyon are captured in exquisitely accurate, eye-popping 3-D, courtesy of the futuristic Ambroziak Infinite Perspective Projection.

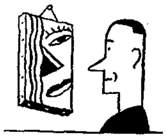
The Anchorage, by Mark Wunderlich (Massachusetts; $19.95). Poised between the shocks of furtive sex and limpid scenes of the summer seaside, Wunderlich's first collection of poems follows the heart's appetitive course, without regret for the hunger that drives it "to dark rooms, / stairwells, steam rooms or beaches." Chasing the "notion that sex is like faith," these poems, in both verse and prose, are as unsettling and intimate as a blood test. If Wunderlich's anchor, the body, repeatedly fetches up on weedy shoals, his book reminds us how fully the spirit can illuminate the depths.

THE ART WORLD

THE REINVENTION OF MOMA

Millennial narcissism at the Museum of Modern Art.

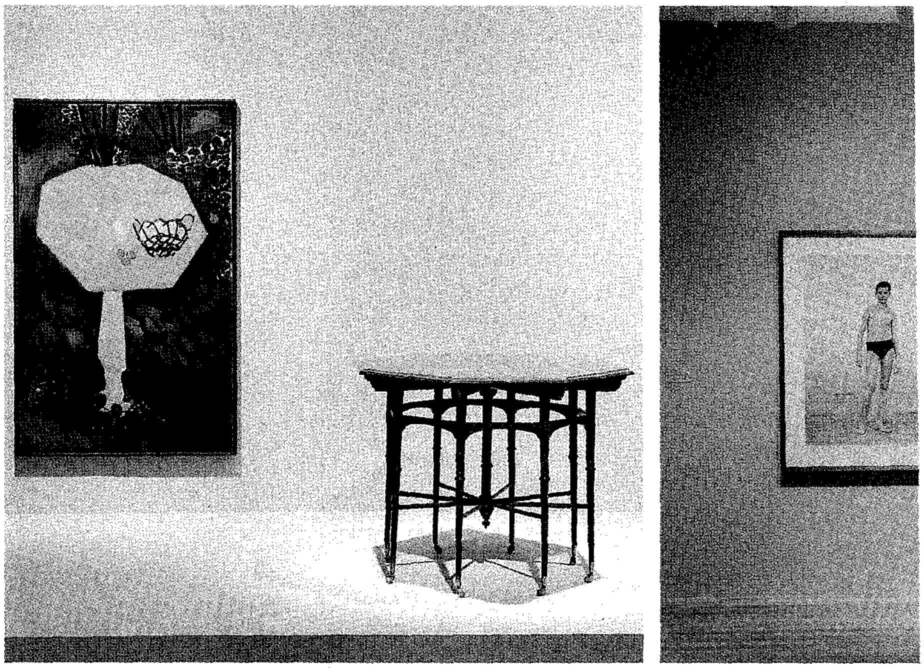
BY PETER SCHJELDAHL



IMAGINE the Museum of Modern Art as a snow globe. Pick it up and shake it. You will have a rough idea of "Modern*Starts*," MOMA's current, turbulent installation of works from its collection—painting, sculpture, graphic art, photography, and design. In three main sections, insouciantly titled "People," "Places," and "Things," the museum-wide exhibition emphasizes works of the period from 1880 to 1920, while interpolating enough later stuff to muddle historical consistency. Forget chronology. Goodbye to MOMA's old, rigid catechism of modern styles. Hello, postmodernistic mix-and-match, albeit with a certain starchiness that is typical of this august institution. Like a guitar Mass in a cathedral, the exercise comes off as sort of hip but not really. Still, it is a must-see for its few revelations and many glancing joys.

"Modern*Starts*" is only the beginning of a project entitled "MOMA2000," which will end next year, when work begins on the museum's physical expansion. "People" will close on February 1st, and "Places" and "Things" on March 14th, to be followed by an installation dealing with the years from 1920 to 1960, "Making Choices," and then one called "Open Ends," which will bring things up to date. If this sounds complicated, consider that the current show features twenty-eight subdivisions, with titles like "The Language of the Body," "Landscape as Retreat," and "Objects as Subjects." Assembled by a curatorial committee, "Modern*Starts*" cries out for a committee of specialists just to keep track of its cascading brainstorms. I've never seen anything so overwrought.

What's going on here? Desperation suggests itself. MOMA faces a historic crisis. It is a victim of its own success as the world's most authoritative institution of twentieth-century visual culture, at a time when that culture is entering the blind spot of a future-preoccupied present. MOMA was founded to advance ideas of progress that are dead now. What to do? One option is to heave a sigh and settle for being a repository of fabulous objects that survive their reasons for being. Another choice, which "Modern*Starts*" evinces, is to do exactly that while pretending otherwise—trendy museology stands in for fading intellectual pertinence.

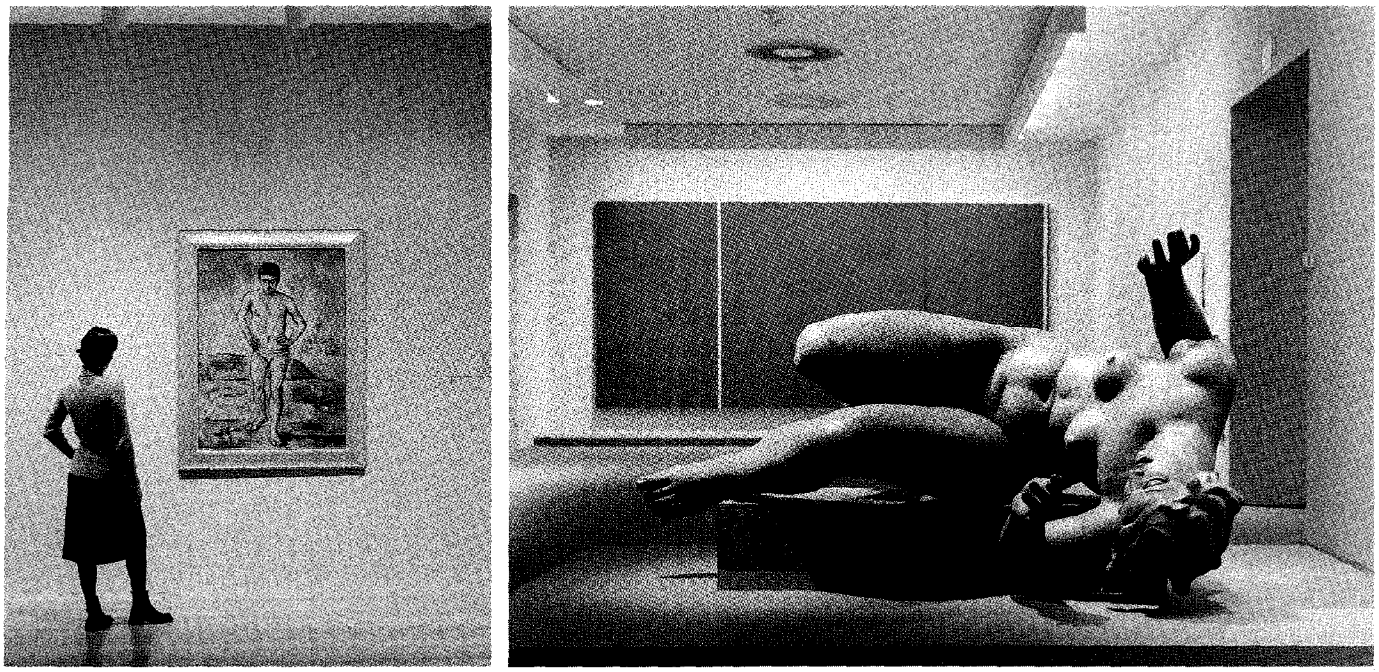


Matisse's "Rose Marble Table" and Godwin's table; Dijkstra's "Odessa, Ukrain

Thank goodness for masterpieces. MOMA owns tons of them, of course, along with vast stores of the kinds of lesser but spicily distinctive works which, if one is in the right mood, seem quite as good as masterpieces. The high quality of the collection, in all areas, can accommodate every curatorial caprice in "Modern*Starts*." Some of the caprices are more appealing than others. I'm wowed by the conjunction, at the entrance to "People," of Aristide Maillol's huge sculpted nude "The River" (1938-1943) and Barnett Newman's big red abstract painting "Vir Heroicus Sublimis" (1950-51). I am not sure what, if anything, the bracketing is about, beyond a display of sheer ambition in disparate modes. But its power flatters the twentieth century. Elsewhere in the show, trickiness undoes itself—as in "Things," where Henri Matisse's ravishing 1917 painting of an octagonal table, "The Rose Marble Table," is hung next to an actual octagonal table from 1875, by Edward William Godwin.

Matisse wins, by the way, throughout an installation that scatters works by individual masters in myriad contexts. Paintings, drawings, and sculpture by the touchy, beauty-racked Frenchman keep transfixing the eye and the soul. Matisse turns out to have had the right idea for the long haul—no idea, but, instead, a supreme irritability in realms of taste. He was passively, rather than actively, modern, reacting to his time's tormenting and inspiring sense of endless possibilities. How he arrived at his particular stylistic contortions was never clear—and now it doesn't matter. What counts is pleasure taken purely for its own sake, and by surprise. Matisse's twentieth century may have been a bit of a trial, but it was never a problem. Whenever you come upon something by him in this problem-mongering exhibition, thought stops, and all is well.

Another winner, for me, was in the "People" galleries—a classic Diane Arbus photograph of a young Brooklyn family on an outing. Arbus won't get fuller treatment until the final installment of "MOMA2000," but this preview crystallized my response to the whole exhibition's generous assortment of photographs. In general, one must salute MOMA's recognition of the current trend toward narrowing the gap in prestige between serious photography and painting. Not until quite recently would the museum have even imagined hanging Cézanne's ultra-canonical "The Bather" beside a large color photograph by Rineke Dijkstra, from 1993, of a teen-age boy in a bathing suit. (This pairing will be the longest-remembered audacity of the show, I suspect.) But too many earnestly educational themes—archival in a segment entitled "The Conquest of the Air," didactic in "Posed to Unposed: Encounters with the Camera"—muffle the show's photographic impact. Am I alone in feeling that Arbus realized, once and for all, photography's spiritual bottom line? That essence is a direct, self-immolating stare into reality, in which the scariest abyss is the otherness of other people.



d Cézanne's "The Bather"; Newman's "Vir Heroicus Sublimis" and Maillol's "The River." Photographs by Jason Schmidt.

The strongest suit of "Modern*Starts*" is idiosyncrasy: the artists are freed from their customary places in MOMA's stylistic forced march. A section of French landscapes achieves disconcerting freshness—thanks, simply, to an organization of paintings by Monet, Cézanne, van Gogh, Seurat, Picasso, Derain, and others according to subject rather than form. It takes a moment to register the fact that, after all, these painters were gazing at God's own rocks and trees while making their innovative magic. Suddenly, the paintings seem as jittery and weird as they must have seemed to viewers at the time. Why are these guys so worked up in the face of nature that they trash the honest look of it? Are they crazy? Well, no, they're modern—that is, crazy with an explanation. Modern art gets newly, wonderfully vertiginous when explanations are no longer the point.

What was Picasso's idiosyncrasy? Control: he subdued art to his will. This feat is not as fascinating as it used to be. Although the Picassos in this show still seem infallibly masterly, they curiously recede in the presence of less majestic but more pungent spirits. I never thought that I could have more fun with Picasso's self-indulgent pal Derain than I could with the man himself, but here I do. An archly conservative, gawky Derain of 1933, "The Rehearsal," erupts like a bugle call for human cussedness. And perhaps the single most stunning coup in "Modern*Starts*" is a room of massed graphic works by the perennially underrated Belgian Symbolist James Ensor and his severely underknown Mexican contemporary José Guadalupe Posada. Those two manic phantasmagorists of death and perversity leap straight from their time into ours. The same can be said of Edvard Munch. He, too, made art about life—and life has not fallen from fashion.

The show's "Things" division marks a long-delayed formal surrender by MOMA to postmodern relativism—at a time of growing exasperation with that and other hobbyhorses of academic theorists. Besides inflicting an actual table on Matisse, the show juxtaposes a window by Frank Lloyd Wright with a painting by Piet Mondrian. In another display, it stages a melee of sculpture, glassware, Surrealist objects, and kitchen utensils. Everything looks terrific, but the cumulative effect of such forced analogies palls. In the present culture, which aestheticizes practically everything, can we please move on? Let's agree, for simple convenience, that art museums should favor items that—unlike chairs and toast racks but like Matisses—aren't nearly as salutary anywhere else.

MOMA is no ordinary art museum, of course. It used to have an exalted mission. Now, on the evidence of "Modern*Starts*," it has developed a colossal neurosis, like that of a needy know-it-all who yammers at you for three hours straight and then, with burning eyes, asks what you think. Such narcissism is probably incurable when the know-it-all is every bit as attractive and brilliant as he imagines himself to be. How do you tell him to shape up? Especially when he's such a great social success, too. Crowds keep paying their way into MOMA, and they always will. That's where the art is. ♦

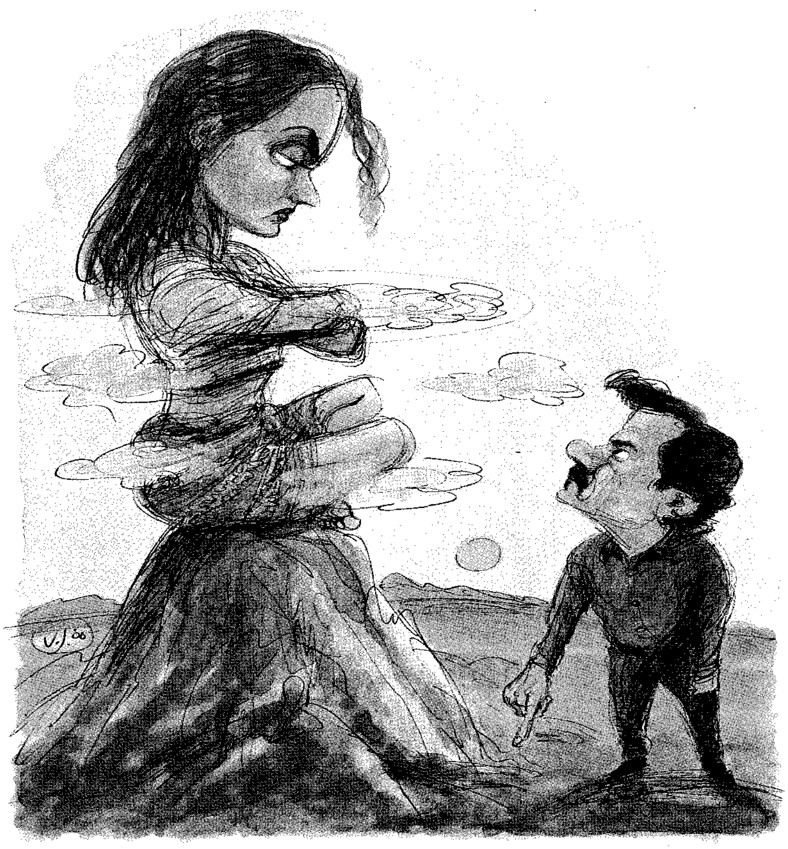
THE CURRENT CINEMA

HIGH TIMES

A lady's flight of fancy, and "Fantasia 2000."

BY ANTHONY LANE

FOR a movie that opens wide at the start of the year 2000, "Holy Smoke" has a strong smell of the nineteen-seventies about it. You might have thought, for instance, that the new epoch would cleanse us of any need to hear Neil Diamond again, yet here is the dear old gargler himself, busting his lungs over the credits. The plot is comparably antique: young, impressionable girl travels to India and finds—or, if you prefer, is suckered into—the path of enlightenment, from which her loved ones try to rescue her. We also get a number of fantasy sequences, in which our heroine, a sacred jewel shining from her forehead, is bathed in oily yellow light or suddenly equipped with multiple working arms, like the goddess Kali or Martha Stewart. As for the villain of the piece, when did you last hear anyone say, or even conceive of saying, "I don't hate women; I love ladies"?



Trading lessons in enlightenment: Winslet and Keitel in "Holy Smoke."

VICTOR JUHASZ

The lady in question is Ruth (Kate Winslet), who, on the ground that "something amazing has happened to me," refuses to return from Delhi to her native Australia. Her mother (Julie Hamilton) is dispatched to lure her back on a ruse. Ruth is told that her father is close to death; she duly returns home and finds him playing golf, which comes to much the same thing. In the meantime, her family doles out ten thousand dollars for the expert services of P. J. Waters, "the No. 1 exit counsellor in America." Ruth should present no obstacle; he has already "exited" a hundred and eighty-nine deluded souls—in other words, restored sanity to those who have been gulled by a religious cult. Here we encounter the overriding problem with this picture. The role demands a strong-jawed type, free of bull, eager to throw the dirt of common sense at badly washed brains. And what do we get? Harvey Keitel. It's like casting Peter Lorre as Louis Pasteur.

The director is Jane Campion, whose sense of time and place has seemed, let us say, creatively supple, ever since she had Holly Hunter sit down to play Michael Nyman arpeggios in nineteenth-century New Zealand. "The Piano" thrummed with a wildness that was all the more insistent for being corseted and controlled; now Campion has cut the laces and let herself go. "Holy Smoke" begins as a riff and ends as a trip; the loose, beguiling flow of the early scenes—Ruth cheerfully washing her mother's hair in preparation for a visit to Baba, the Indian guru who has caused all the fuss—widens into something more deranged. The action lurches to the Australian outback, or, to be precise, to an emu farm in the Australian outback. Characters pop up from nowhere, half introduced; minor relationships inflate and subside; Ruth's giggling sister-in-law asks P.J., "Do you have a Web site?" shortly before adopting the Lewinsky position. Campion films, from "Sweetie" onward, have thrived on a casually sought surrealism, but lately, in "The Portrait of a Lady" and now in "Holy Smoke," the oddity feels arch to the point of desperation; the sight of Ruth's relations showing up without warning in cowboy gear was, I fear, the point at which Campion lost me. Maybe it's all that sand; think what the dunes of California did to poor Antonioni in "Zabriskie Point," or how Bertolucci was led astray by Moroccan wastes in "The Sheltering Sky." The most charitable reading of "Holy Smoke" is that it marks a staging post in the long and loopy tradition of lust in the dust.

Yet, for all this, the picture needs to be seen. That need has little to do with Jane Campion and everything to do with Kate Winslet. Her part demands that she be, to an extent, out to lunch, but she seems by far the sanest and most copiously lunched person connected with this project. Whether Winslet has a game plan I have no idea (she looks more like the happy victim of impulse than a mistress of calculation), but you can't help admiring the way in which she has followed "Titanic" with a couple of light, travel-stained short stories—first "Hideous Kinky" and now "Holy Smoke." Neither really works, but she emerges from them as a free spirit, whose flights of maddening fancy take off from the earthiest and least precious of emotions. It may be no coincidence that Leonardo DiCaprio, too, has wandered abroad for the forthcoming "The Beach": it is as though neither star wanted to be sunk by the intolerable tonnage of success—as if they wanted to jump ship and drift buoyantly on, leaving their baggage behind them.

What, if anything, do we mean when we call performers "natural"? It goes beyond lack of mannerism, certainly, to an easy inhabiting of their own physical presence, and into a weird entwining of arrogance and humility; the message they beam to us goes something like "This is, more or less, the sum of me, and you can take it or leave it." The offer is so generous that we tend to take it, and I suspect that, as the age of dazzling, camouflaged technicians like Meryl Streep and Robert De Niro starts to wind down, we will seek such openness again. I first spotted it in Winslet during the riverbank scene in "Jude"; what it had to do with Thomas Hardy is anyone's guess, but as she waved her cigarette and spoke her mind you saw a woman striding headlong into modernity—a vision as thrilling, in its way, as Jeanne Moreau running across the bridge in "Jules and Jim" with a painted mustache. Winslet may not be the greatest actress in the world, but she has the least to hide; she takes her clothes off in almost every film, but it is the act less of a narcissist than of an impatient voluptuary, craving relief. (In that respect, Campion was right to cast her as a hippie.) "Do you like my personality or do you like my breasts best?" Ruth asks P.J. It may be the most candid inquiry in the history of cinema. As far as Winslet is concerned, of course, you can't have one without the other.

For all its lunacy, "Holy Smoke" strikes me as too inflexible for honest Kate. My heart sank as the camera craned high above a row of houses, in a suburb of Sydney, in order to stress their damnable conformity. Campion is quite a hater; she misses no opportunity to sneer at Ruth's uncomprehending parents, although Julie Hamilton, as the mother, is so sympathetic an actress that the disdain backfires. The tale slowly tightens into a two-hander, as Ruth and P.J. hole up together, sleep together, and exchange therapies; in bed, she asks him not to come too soon (a request that he is unable to honor), then exhorts him to don women's clothing and sends him out into the scrubland in a tomato-colored dress and one black boot. Fortunately, Winslet is at once too tender and too sensible for this ritual exercise in humiliation; in her hands, it becomes more of a spree, and the only scene that really grips her, you sense, is her quiet master class in how to kiss a woman, north and south. If that is the sole path of enlightenment that "Holy Smoke" has to show, so be it; I shall follow the wisdom of Winslet for the rest of my days.

STRANGE to tell, "Holy Smoke" is only the second druggiest film of the new year. "Fantasia 2000," which is currently lambasting eyeballs at an IMAX theatre near you, feels like an earnest initiative to wean the youth of America off crack cocaine and onto pure-cut Walt Disney. The thing about IMAX is that the image is so enveloping, and the seats are raked so sharply, that you can practically poke the screen with your nose. At one poignant moment a toy ballerina comes to life, and eight-year-old boys across the country will be twisting their necks to look up her tutu.

Uncle Walt's 1940 film was meant as a work in progress; the idea was that new segments would be added as time went by. Sixty years on, a little late, here they are. We get butterflies with Beethoven's Fifth, flying whales with Respighi, a New York frenzy for "Rhapsody in Blue," Shostakovich for the ballerina and her beau (a one-legged tin soldier, courtesy of Hans Christian Andersen), flamingos for Saint-Saëns, and, as James Levine solemnly tells the camera, "'Pomp and Circumstance,' starring Donald Duck." Is that mismatch pleasingly ironic, or are you overpowered by the smell of kitsch? Should we gaze in wonder at the majesty of Disney design, or do the cutely drawn eyes of the characters—whales included—give the game away? The matter is settled, I fear, by the final segment, in which Stravinsky's "The Firebird" is gutted and spatchcocked by a grisly piece of eco-rubbish, all woodland sprites and stag's breath. Tucked into this farrago is "The Sorcerer's Apprentice," a rerun of the Mickey Mouse tale from the original; it still looks the most luminous and least pompous of the sequences, although the New York section pays witty homage to the draftsmanship of Al Hirschfeld. In an editorial, *Art Digest* hailed the first "Fantasia" as "an aesthetic experience never to be forgotten." Twenty-four hours after this experience, I could hardly remember a thing. ♦

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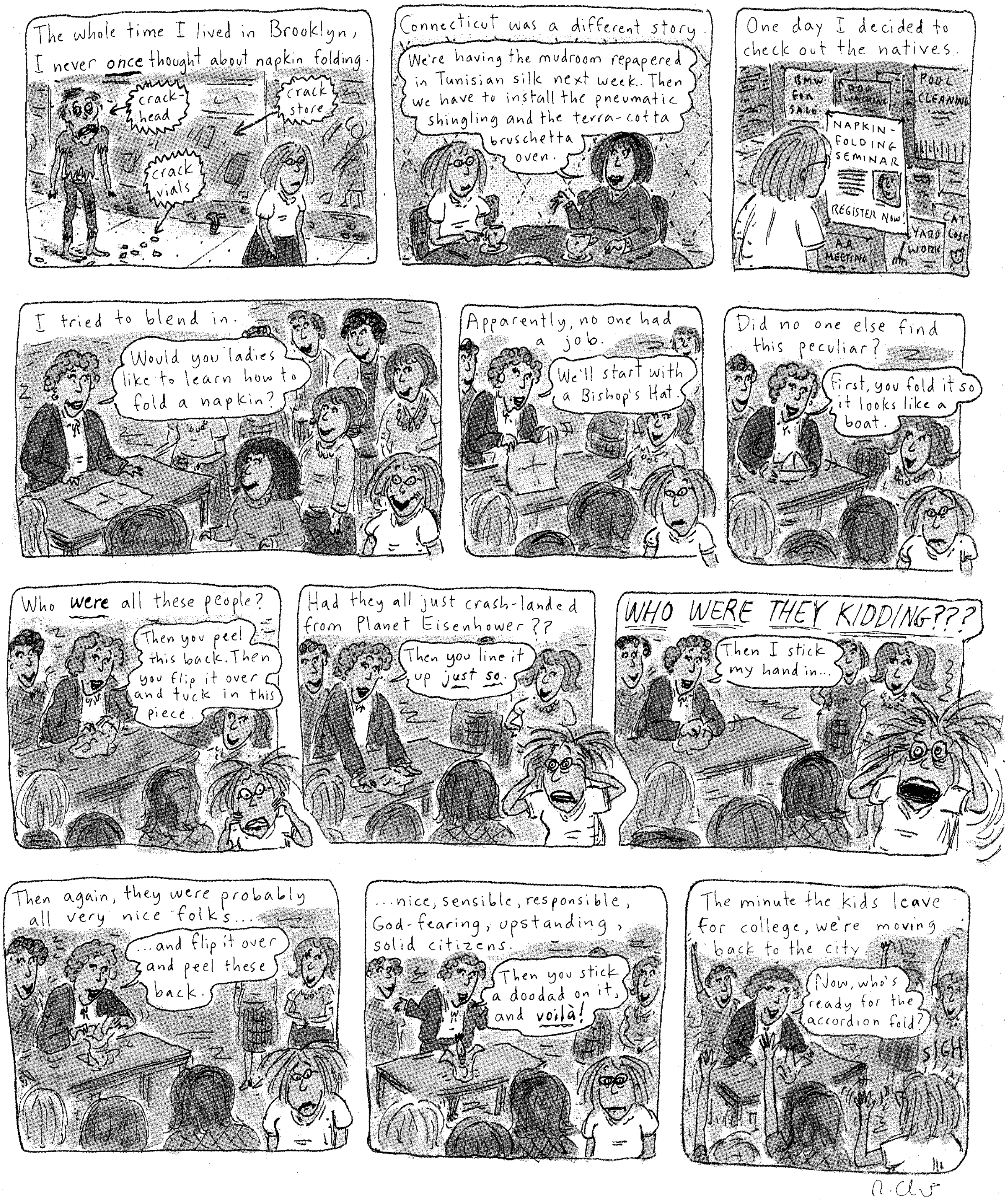
THE BACK PAGE BY ROZ CHAST

When in Rome...


The whole time I lived in Brooklyn, I never once thought about napkin folding.
crack-head
crack store
crack vials
Connecticut was a different story.
We're having the mudroom repapered in Tunisian silk next week. Then we have to install the pneumatic shingling and the terra-cotta bruschetta oven.
One day I decided to check out the natives.
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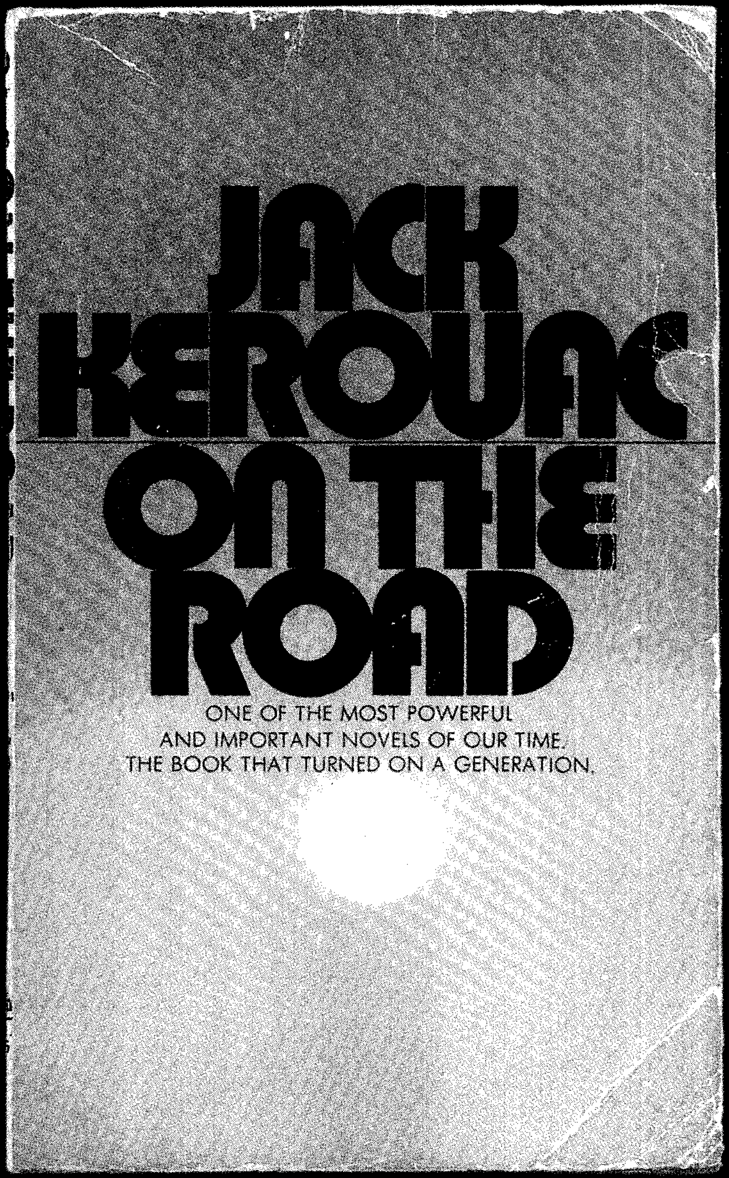
I tried to blend in.
Would you ladies like to learn how to fold a napkin?
Apparently, no one had a job.
We'll start with a Bishop's Hat.
Did no one else find this peculiar?
First, you fold it so it looks like a boat.
Who were all these people?
Then you peel this back. Then you flip it over and tuck in this piece.
Had they all just crash-landed from Planet Eisenhower??
Then you line it up just so.
WHO WERE THEY KIDDING???
Then I stick my hand in...
Then again, they were probably all very nice folks...
...and flip it over and peel these back.
...nice, sensible, responsible, God-fearing, upstanding, solid citizens.
Then you stick a doodad on it, and voilà!
The minute the kids leave for college, we're moving back to the city.
Now, who's ready for the accordion fold?
SIGH

June 22, 1972. Girlfriend forgets in bus somewhere near Kathmandu.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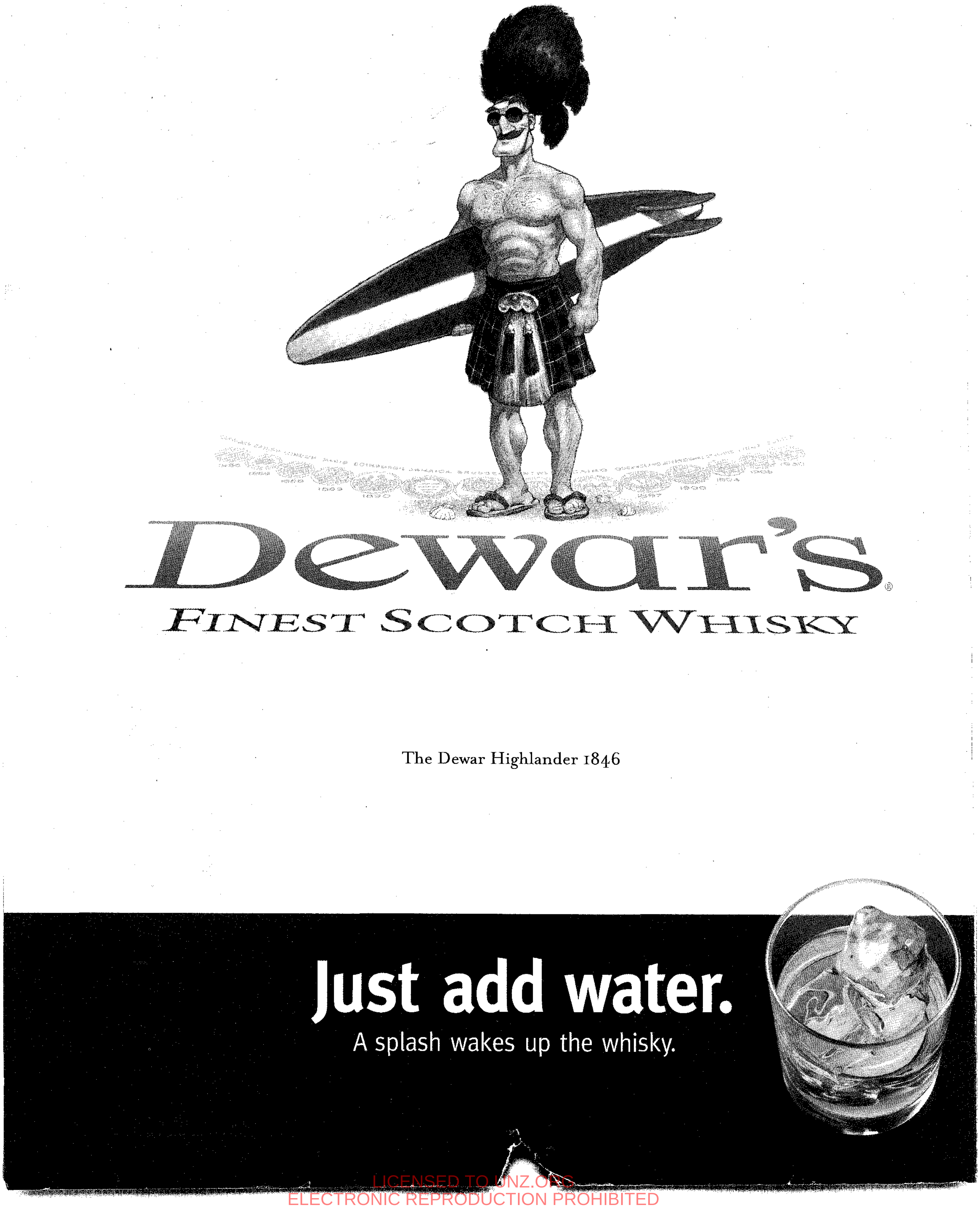

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